DH

DECCAN HERALD

The Power of Good

Japan's 'Iron Lady' Takaichi records stunning win

Page 12

World

Iran defies US threats over uranium enrichment P12

Nation

Dalai Lama's office denies spiritual leader's Epstein meeting P.9

State

CM's chopper lands at wrong helipad P.3

Nation

Oppn to raise US trade deal in Parliament P.8

- Bangalore South MP Tejasvi Surya visits RV Road metro station on Sunday and says hike has been deferred
- BMRCL maintains it has not received official communication and that the hike will go ahead as announced
- As suspense lingers, BMRCL receives directions from the ministry on Sunday evening, asking to defer the hike
- The pause will last "until further orders" and is subject to review by the BMRCL board

Suspense ends, metro fare hike on hold

Temporary relief for commuters amid state-Centre tussle

BENGALURU, DHNS

The 5% hike in Namma Metro fares, slated to come into effect from Monday, has been put on hold following directions from the Union government.

The pause will last "until further orders" and is subject to review by the BMRCL board, the public transporter said on Sunday.

The volte-face came after days of intense public backlash and political bickering over who controls the fares of Bengaluru's metro network: Karnataka or the Centre.

Bangalore Metro Rail Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) had announced the hike — by Rs 1-5 across all 10 fare zones — under annual automatic revision recommended by the Fare Fixation Committee (FFC), whose report is binding on it.

MP Tejasvi Surya with commuters at RV Road Metro Station on Sunday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

> "It (BMRCL) made fare implementation errors and moved to an altogether different system while correcting it. Fares are now based on stations travelled as opposed to the earlier distance travelled.
>
> **SATYA ARIKUTHARAM**
> Independent mobility expert

> "They (the state) were the ones who asked for such a high increase, citing weak finances and the inability to continue the Shadow Cash Support (SCS) that earlier governments were providing.
>
> **TEJASVI SURYA**
> Bangalore South MP

The minimum was to be Rs 11 and the maximum Rs 95.

The hike was timed exactly a year after the fares had been increased by an average of 51.55% before discounts and 46.39% after discounts, making the Bengaluru metro one of the most expensive in the country.

As public discontent grew and Opposition BJP leaders slammed the hike, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah urged the Centre to reconsider the fare levels and explore mechanisms to moderate or rationalise them.

He maintained that the fares were determined by an independent FFC constituted solely by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

▸ Metro fare, Page 5

'Gogoi Pak visa deviated from 2012 regime'

GUWAHATI, DHNS: Assam CM Himanta Biswa on Sunday said an SIT investigation revealed that Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi was issued visa by Pakistan during his visit in 2013 that deviated from the 2012 India-Pakistan visa regime.

Sarma said the visa regime allowed only city specific visas. "Gaurav was granted visa on December 12, 2013, to visit only Lahore but on December 16, the Ministry of Interior, Pakistan allowed him to visit Islamabad and Karachi," the SIT report said.

Details on Page 8

BJP deletes Himanta clip, Page 8

Can buy goods worth $500 bn from US: Goyal

NEW DELHI, PTI: India will have no difficulty in purchasing goods worth $500 billion from the US over the next five years, as envisaged under the bilateral trade pact, and in fact, this is an "extremely" conservative number for a country which aspires to become a $30 trillion economy, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

"My sense is we need at least a 100 billion dollar plus only for the aviation sector, in addition to oil, LNG, LPG, and crude oil," Goyal said.

Details on Page 8

BCB, PCB chiefs hold talks in Lahore over India match

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi met his Bangladesh counterpart Aminul Islam in Lahore on Sunday even as efforts to resolve the standoff over Pakistan's proposed boycott of the T20 World Cup match against India gather pace. ICC's Imran Khwaja has also arrived in Lahore.

P 13

Mini plane crashes, both occupants eject

Two people, including the pilot, had a narrow escape when a private mini aircraft crashed in Vijayapura district on Sunday after it ran out of fuel, police sources said.

Both the occupants ejected before the 50-year-old plane crashed, sources said, adding that it broke into three pieces.

P 4

ICC MEN'S T20 WORLD CUP

TODAY'S MATCHES

Italy vs Scotland	@11am
Oman vs Zimbabwe	@3pm
Canada vs S Africa	@7pm

India, Malaysia call for zero tolerance on terror

Agree to bolster trade, defence ties

ANIRBAN BHAUMIK
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim in Kuala Lumpur. PTI

India and Malaysia on Sunday agreed to expand defence cooperation, particularly in the domain of maritime security, even as the prime ministers of the two nations, Narendra Modi and Anwar Ibrahim, called for zero tolerance against terrorism and vowed to step up cooperation against radicalisation and violent extremism.

Modi and Ibrahim agreed on the need for early completion of the India-ASEAN Trade in Goods Agreement.

They agreed to promote usage of local currency in bilateral trade and encouraged industries on both sides to further facilitate the invoicing and settlement of trade in local currencies.

The prime ministers encouraged greater cooperation and two-way investments across priority sectors, like infrastructure, energy, advanced manufacturing, semiconductors, healthcare, digital economy, fintech, startups, artificial intelligence, hospitality, green technologies and other high-value sectors.

▸ Modi, Page 5

BJP's 'achche din' because of RSS: Bhagwat

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

In a significant statement, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat said that the Sangh had played a role in bringing 'achche din' for the BJP, not the other way around, even as he praised the ruling party on multiple issues, including the building of the Ram Temple and the 'improved' security scenario in India.

Speaking during an interaction to mark the RSS's centenary in Mumbai, he asked Indians not to nurture fear of partition, but imagine Akhand Bharat in 2047.

The RSS chief also reiterated the earlier statement of early marriage and the three-child norm for societal stability.

To a question whether the 'achche din' for the RSS came after the BJP came to power, Bhagwat said, "...achche din did not come because of the BJP, actually it is the other way round...our achche din came from our hard work.... We remained committed to the construction of the Ram Mandir and those who supported it benefited."

He stated that within the Sangh Parivar, various organisations, including the VHP, Bajrang Dal, and the BJP, all function independently.

"They all are independent bodies, but there are several swayamsevaks working in it. If needed, we give advice to them; if required, we alert them, but the decisions are theirs.Sometimes their sins are blamed on us because they have come from within us as swayamsevaks," he said.

Infiltration, conversions skew population: Bhagwat, Page 8

PERILOUS JOURNEY

Bengaluru has 64 deadly stretches: Traffic cops

RISKY ROADS

- Banaswadi- Outer Ring Road, near Croma Showroom
- K R Puram- Bhattarahalli to Medahalli Bridge
- Yelahanka- Jakkuru On Flyover, BB Road
- Kengeri - Madhu Petrol Bunk Junction
- Electronics City - Veerasandra Junction

DH EXCLUSIVE

ASHWIN BM
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bengaluru's notorious traffic has long been a source of public frustration, but a new report detailing the accident 'black spots' for 2023-2025 points out many of the city's busiest stretches are also its most deadly.

Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) officials have officially mapped 64 critical locations, where a dangerous mix of high-speed transit and poor road engineering continues to claim lives.

The report, exclusively accessed by *DH*, identifies East Bengaluru, specifically zones under Banaswadi, K R Puram, and HAL Airport, as the city's primary fatality hub.

These areas, dominated by the Outer Ring Road (ORR) and National Highways, suffer from a severe infrastructure-safety gap. East Bengaluru has emerged as the city's most dangerous region, with the highest concentration of high-risk locations.

The Banaswadi Traffic Police Station jurisdiction alone accounts for four major black spots, including the ORR near the Croma showroom, Ramamurthy Nagar ASR Kalyana Mantap, Tin Factory Skywalk to Hanging Bridge Madeena Masjid Old Madras Road and the Babusapalya bus stand, a key transit point on the ORR.

▸ Black spots, Page 5

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A HUMBLE HELLO

A groundnut seller, carrying his child, greets policemen near Freedom Park in the city. DH PHOTO/RANJU P

Rs 550-cr garbage row: Sworn affidavits sought

UDD move ups accountability in waste tender row

NAVEEN MENEZES
BENGALURU, DHNS

The city's massive garbage collection contracts — worth over Rs 550 crore annually — have come under renewed scrutiny, with the Urban Development Department (UDD) directing the Bangalore Solid Waste Management Authority (BSWML) to file sworn counter-affidavits in response to multiple appeals challenging the tender awards.

In a recent communication, the department asked BSWML to submit affidavit-based replies for each appeal filed against the newly finalised waste collection and transportation contracts.

Officials say the move places responsibility on oath, making the officers concerned personally accountable for defending the decisions taken.

63 appeals, 33 packages

The contracts, floated in July 2025 following directions from the Karnataka High Court, divided waste collection and transportation across Greater Bengaluru into 33 packages spanning five civic corporations.

Spread over seven years, the total value of the contracts is close to Rs 4,000 crore.

After BSWML's Technical Evaluation Committee announced the successful bidders, around 63 unsuccessful firms filed appeals before the UDD, alleging irregularities in the evaluation process. Several disputed packages cover fast-growing constituencies such as Mahadevapura, Dasarahalli, KR Puram and Yeshwantpur.

A garbage collection point off Hosur Road. DH FILE PHOTO

Garbage collection contracts in the city, covering wet, dry and sanitary waste from households, have long been contentious, frequently marred by performance disputes, delayed payments and allegations of favouritism.

The appellants claim that some selected bidders failed to meet mandatory technical and financial criteria, including adequate vehicle strength, minimum financial capacity to manage large-scale operations, and compliance with statutory payments such as PF and ESI. One of the firms, they allege, had also been blacklisted elsewhere.

Notably, the UDD's directive places responsibility for filing the affidavit-based responses on the General Manager (Technical) of BSWML, even though the bids were cleared by a Technical Evaluation Committee headed by an IAS officer.

Garbage collection contracts in the city, covering wet, dry and sanitary waste from households, have long been contentious, frequently marred by performance disputes, delayed payments and allegations of favouritism.

The new tenders introduced reforms such as stricter penalty clauses, induction of GPS-enabled vehicles and an expanded fleet for the city's fast-growing outskirts.

Bus hit rail track due to trespass, not gate lapse: SWR

Railways responds to concerns over city level crossings

BENGALURU, DHNS

The South Western Railway (SWR) on Sunday said the recent collision involving a BMTC bus and a train near Sadarmangala was caused by unauthorised trespassing on railway land, and not due to any lapse in safety measures at a level crossing.

Responding to a *DH* report titled 'Reality check: Several railway crossings in the city lack basic safety measures', published on February 8, the SWR stated that the bus had intruded into railway property at a location not designated as a level crossing.

Despite the presence of sleepers and fencing, people continue to trespass across railway tracks to access Sadarmangala Road, the railways said, adding that such actions pose serious risks to life.

"The public is requested to refrain from trespassing on railway tracks, as it is a punishable offence and endangers safety," the SWR said in its clarification.

Addressing safety concerns raised at other locations, the railways provided the following updates:

Shampura (Level Crossing 143): Road-widening has been proposed between Banaswadi and Hebbal. Signal-shifting work is currently in progress to facilitate the project.

Kodigehalli (LC No 10): The level crossing has been eliminated following the construction of a Road Under Bridge (RUB). A pedestrian subway has been sanctioned, with the tender process nearing completion.

Yelahanka Yard: The railway portion of a new subway was completed in 2023.

However, construction of approach roads by the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) remains stalled due to land acquisition issues.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Foundation Stone Laying Ceremony: 'Dharmika Soudha': Ramalinga Reddy, Rizwan Arshad, PC Mohan, Rajendra Kumar Kataria to attend; MS Building; from 10.15 am onwards.

Valedictory Ceremony: 69th National Boxing Championship; T Palaksha, Chandralal, I Venkateswara Rao to attend; Organised by School Games Federation of India; St Claret PU College, Jalahalli; 2 pm.

CULTURAL

Valedictory Ceremony: Indian Art History Congress; Shatavadhani R Ganesh to attend; Organised by The Mythic Society; Janaseva Vidyakendra, Channenahalli, Magadi Main Road; from 4.30 pm onwards.

Art Exhibition: 'Harmony'; N Manu Chakravarthy to attend; Karnataka Chitrakala Parishath, Kumarakrupa Road; 5.30 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mainly clear sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	30.0°C
Minimum	17.0°C

Rainfall (as of 8:30 am)	--
Humidity (as of 5:30 pm)	28%
Sunset (Feb 9)	6:23 pm
Sunrise (Feb 10)	6:44 am
Moonrise	11:54 pm
Moonset	10:55 am

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Study flags lasting cognitive gaps in child cancer survivors

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Children who survive cancer often experience lasting cognitive difficulties, including lower intelligence levels and attention deficits, according to a recent study published on 'ScienceDirect', a leading scientific and medical research platform.

The study, published in the journal 'Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews', found that 18% of non-central nervous system (non-CNS) cancer survivors have lower intelligence levels, while 10–12% struggle with attention-related issues.

Other studies cited report that 40–60% of survivors face challenges with executive function, learning and memory, visual and motor skills, and language development — factors that significantly affect school readiness.

Psychologists and oncologists in Bengaluru say these difficulties extend beyond academics, impacting nearly every aspect of learning after treatment.

"Children who survive cancer often present with severe anxiety, depression and adjustment issues," said Dr Vyjayanthi B, Consultant, Department of Psychiatry. "Disrupted routines, prolonged absence from school and separation from peers create a sense of isolation, which can later manifest as anger or behavioural issues not previously seen."

S SUPARNA
Psychologist

"Sometimes schools help, but other times it breaks them. Whispers from classmates and pressure to catch up academically often lead to emotional breakdowns. While survivors are monitored for relapse, mental health check-ins frequently fall through the cracks.

She added that many survivors struggle to attain cognitive and emotional maturity at the same pace as their peers.

Highlighting the school environment's role, psychologist S Suparna said support systems can be inconsistent. "Sometimes school helps, but other times it breaks them. Whispers from classmates and pressure to catch up academically often lead to emotional breakdowns. While survivors are monitored for relapse, mental health check-ins frequently fall through the cracks."

Oncologists point to cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy as major contributors to these developmental challenges.

"These therapies can affect brain growth in younger children and cause hormone imbalances, delayed puberty, chronic fatigue and emotional health issues, areas most schools are ill-equipped to handle," said Dr Prerana Nesargi, Consultant Paediatric Oncologist.

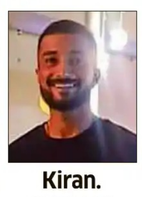
She noted that comprehensive survivorship programmes remain largely absent. "Surviving cancer is not just about being disease-free; it's about enabling a child to live a fully functional life."

Echoing this, Dr Raghuram CP, Senior Consultant in Paediatric Haematology, said survivorship care must go beyond treatment.

"While some programmes are emerging, they are insufficient. Survivorship should include care plans for families and primary care providers, risk-based screening at regular intervals, and coordinated access to services such as physical therapy, speech therapy, psychological support, educational assistance and transition to adult survivorship programmes during late adolescence."

Bodybuilder dies by suicide following lover's engagement to another man

BENGALLURU, DHNS: A bodybuilder allegedly took his life after learning that the woman he was in love with got engaged to another man.



Kiran. FACEBOOK

The body of 26-year-old Kiran from Mahalakshmi Layout was found in his room on Saturday after phone calls to him went unanswered. The door was broken into and Kiran was found hanging.

Arriving at the scene, the Mahalakshmi Layout police moved the body for autopsy and other legal procedures. They filed a case and launched a probe into Kiran's death.

Sources said Kiran has left behind a note. "He named Divya and her mother Parvathamma in the note, which has been handed to the police. An FIR has been registered," his sister Keerthana told reporters.

Keerthana said the woman depended on Kiran for her financial liabilities and was also in a relationship with others.

"He is not the one to take such a step. He was very brave. You can ask anyone here. He became upset and did this. She must be punished for this, and we need to know the reason behind my brother's death," she added.

It is alleged that Kiran, who was in a relationship with the woman for some time, became upset after she showed him the wedding invite and a newly purchased saree. He was also planning a Valentine's Day celebration with her.

"We are investigating all aspects of the case. At this point, nothing further can be said about the reason behind the extreme step," a senior police officer said.

Kiran had also taken part in a few bodybuilding competitions.

Help is a call away

If you are in distress or having suicidal tendencies, please reach out to these 24/7 helplines: KIRAN 1800-599-0019 or Arogya Sahayavani at 104.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

E-Tender Notice No. 01 MYS 2025
Dated: 21-01-2026

The undersigned, on behalf of the President of India, Invites E-Tenders for the following items:

Item of work	Approx. Value
Supply of 11KV/415 V Outdoor type 1000 KVA dry type Compact Sub Station (CSS)	Rs. 57,06,125/-

Tender No. L9256059A.

Last date for submission of bids : **Upto 10:30 Hrs. on 16-02-2026**

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in
Keep visiting the website for any corrigendum till closing date

Senior Divisional Materials Manager
PUB/847/AAF/PRB/SWR/2025-26 **Mysuru**

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NOTICE OF LODGEMENT OF PETITION OF APPEAL TO THE RESPONDENT (RULE 8(I) & (III) of ORDER XIX, S.C.R. 2013) IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION CIVIL APPEAL No. 2528 OF 2025

(Appeal by Special Leave granted by this Court's Order dated the 10th February, 2025 in Petition for SLP(C) No. 3064 of 2025 from the Judgment and Order dated the 16th December, 2024 of the High Court of Karnataka at Bengaluru, KARNATAKA in RFA No. 1699 of 2015)

NARAYANA RAJU AND ANR ... **APPELLANT(s)**

-VERSUS-

JAMUNA AND ORS. ... **RESPONDENT(s)**

To, **1 Smt. Kamalamma**, W/o Late Krishnappa, R/at Hongasandra Village, Garbebhavi Palya, Begur Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk - 560068.
PID: 28233/2026 FOR R[12] IN C.A. NO. 2528/2025 (SEC IV-A)

2. Sri. Ramappa, S/o Late Munivenkatappa, R/at Hongasandra Village, Garbebhavi Palya, Begur Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk - 560068.
PID: 28234/2026 FOR R[13] IN C.A. No. 2528/2025 (SEC IV-A)

TAKE NOTICE that the Appellant above-named has on the 21st January, 2025 filed in the Registry of the Supreme Court, Petition for SLP(C) No. 3064 of 2025 from the Judgment and Order of the High Court above mentioned and pursuant to this Court's order dated 10th February, 2025 granting Special Leave to Appeal the case has been registered as CIVIL APPEAL No. 2528 of 2025.

NOTICE IS HEREBY given to you that if you wish to contest the appeal, you may appear before this Court within thirty days of the publication of this Notice either in person or by an Advocate-on-Record of this Court appointed by you in that behalf and take such part in the proceedings as you may be advised.

TAKE FURTHER NOTICE THAT in default of your appearance within the time prescribed, the appeal will be proceeded with and determined in your absence and no further notice in relation thereto shall be given to you.

Dated: 06-02-2026 Assistant Registrar

Copy to :-
1. Mr. Bharadwaj S. (adv.)
2. Ms. Lubna Naaz (adv.)
3. Nishant Patil Assistant Registrar

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Appointment of Vice-Chancellor of University of Hyderabad

Applications are invited for the post of **Vice-Chancellor of University of Hyderabad.** The Vice-Chancellor, being the academic as well as administrative head, is expected to be:

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- Appointment will be made from a panel of names recommended by a Committee constituted under the provisions of Act of the University.
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- Candidates are required to **"APPLY ONLINE ONLY"** on the Ministry of Education SAMARTH portal as per the link given below:

https://vcrec.samarth.ac.in/index.php/

- The above link will be active from **09.02.2026,** 10:00 Hours to **10.03.2026,** 17:00 Hours.

CBC 21201/11/0019/2526

After husband dies in gas leak, woman dies by suicide

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 42-year-old woman allegedly died by suicide shortly after learning that her husband had died in a gas leak caused by a geyser malfunction.

The deceased has been identified as Meena Raju, a private bank employee. Her husband, Raju (48), worked as a driver.

According to the police, the incident came to light on Friday evening when the couple's 19-year-old son alerted neighbours after his father failed to respond for over 30 minutes after entering the bathroom for a shower. Raju was later found dead.

Police said the son informed Meena, who left home soon after receiving the news. However, instead of returning, she went to Jakkasandra, where the family was constructing a house and allegedly died by suicide.

Sources said Meena left behind a note detailing the family's financial liabilities and assets to be transferred to her son. She reportedly concluded the note by seeking forgiveness.

Two separate unnatural death reports (UDRs) have been registered — one by the Nelamangala Town police and the other by the Madanayakanahalli police. The bodies were handed over to the family after post-mortem on Saturday.

Cab driver assaulted by drunk women after late-night crash

BENGALURU, DHNS: Two women, allegedly under the influence of alcohol, were taken into custody after they attacked a cab driver and abused bystanders following a road accident in Hulimavu on Saturday night.

According to the police, the incident occurred when the women, returning home from a party on a two-wheeler, crashed into the cab.

When the driver questioned them about the collision, the women allegedly assaulted him and verbally abused members of the public who gathered at the spot and attempted to calm the situation.

Hulimavu police intervened, brought the women to the police station and initiated legal proceedings.

A video of the altercation later surfaced on social media and went viral, prompting police action.

Need a hand? Write to us

Letters of grievances are pouring in and we are doing our best to accommodate as many as possible. Readers may write in to highlight civic problems affecting their locality and we will help address them in an interactive and effective manner.
Grievances and issues related to public utility agencies such as Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP), Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB), Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTC) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited (Bescom) would be highlighted in the weekly column.

The writeups, which could be accompanied by photographs highlighting the problems, will be published on Mondays. Mail your grievances to: peoplesproblems @deccanherald.co.in

New corporations are fine, but who do we contact?

Months after the creation of five city corporations under the Greater Bangalore Authority (GBA), there is still no clear information on the departments or officials responsible for addressing civic issues such as potholes, dysfunctional streetlights, stray dogs, and garbage piling up on roadsides.

Citizens remain clueless about whom to contact to raise such problems. Previously, a helpline existed for grievance redressal, but it is no longer functional.

I urge the GBA to release the contact details of departments and officials in charge of each corporation to facilitate timely grievance redress.

Shankaranarayan
Krishnanagar

Garbage dumping in Konanakunte

Lack of civic sense is on full display in Srinidhi Layout, Konanakunte, where people continue to dump garbage on empty plots.

The attached photograph shows one such plot on 5th Main Road, which connects Chunchaghatta Main Road to Jambu Savari Dinne.

This happens despite regular dry and wet waste collection in the locality. Residents dump garbage either in the wee hours or while travelling on two-wheelers.

Bengaluru South City Corporation staff appear to turn a blind eye, as if it isn't their responsibility. The problem is worsened by stray dogs, cattle, and rodents spreading the waste onto the roads.

Can we blame the quadrupeds for a mess created by bipeds?

Madhukar Vijendra
Retd General Marketing Manager, HMT

Garbage dumped on 5th Main Road, which connects Chunchaghatta Main Road to Jambu Savari Dinne.

CBC 06124/15/0004/2526
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Agri minister seeks Centre's cooperation to expand exports

BENGALURU, DHNS: Agriculture Minister N Chaluvarayaswamy said on Sunday that the Union government's cooperation was needed to expand exports and the availability of basic facilities in the agriculture sector.

Speaking during the valedictory function of the International Trade Fair 2026 – Organics & Millets, the minister noted that the Union government's assistance was needed for cold storage, transportation facilities, branding, exporting and so on. "In 2022-23, Karnataka exported around 8,000 tonnes of millets and millet products worth Rs 36 crore and contributed to 40% of the overall millet exports in the country. The millets from Karnataka are being exported to countries like America, Australia, Canada, Qatar, UAE, Thailand and Singapore," he said.

Now, blood transfusions for foetuses at Indira Gandhi hosp

To treat anaemia and Rh incompatibility cases

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Centre of Excellence for Rare Disease (COERD) at Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, Bengaluru, has started conducting blood transfusions on foetuses in cases of anaemia and differing Rhesus (Rh) factors between the mother and the foetus.

Usually, when the child and mother have different Rhs — the mother is negative while the father and baby are positive — during and at the end of pregnancy, the mother receives an injection called 'Anti D'.

In a subsequent pregnancy, if there is another Rh-positive baby, these antibodies can cross the placenta and attack the baby's blood cells, causing Haemolytic Disease of the Newborn (HDN), which can lead to anaemia, jaundice or even death.

To save the foetus from HDN, doctors are resorting to blood transfusions.

Dr Sanjeeva G N, professor of paediatrics and nodal officer at COERD, said: "We have had two very crucial cases here. A mother at the end of her previous pregnancy was not given an Anti-D injection. The second child was also Rh-positive, which posed a threat to the baby, leading to anaemia."

A file photo of Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health in Bengaluru. The institute offers foetal blood transfusion for free. Patients only have to pay for the blood, which costs approximately Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000.

"An ultrasound scan showed the haemoglobin at 8, whereas the usual foetal haemoglobin is around 20. Accordingly, O negative blood was transfused to the baby, helping raise the haemoglobin to 18," the doctor added.

O negative blood is typically chosen for transfusion as the blood group is a universal donor. For the foetus, blood exposed to radiation is used to destroy the donor's white blood cells and prevent any kind of host disease.

"The transfusion procedure is free. Patients only have to pay for blood, which costs Rs 3,000 to Rs 4,000. In some cases, blood transfusion is required more than once," said Dr Sanjeeva.

The same procedure costs between Rs 40,000 and Rs 60,000 in private hospitals.

Asked whether the initiative will be expanded to other government medical facilities, a senior health official said: "Blood transfusion is usually needed in rare cases, so patients will be referred to Indira Gandhi Hospital instead of offering service everywhere."

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah alights from the helicopter that landed at the wrong helipad due to error on the pilot's part at Lingsugur in Raichur district.

Pilot error: CM's chopper lands at wrong helipad

Siddu irked as he lands at facility meant for Jarkiholi's helicopter

LINGSUGUR (RAICHUR DIST), DHNS

The helicopter carrying Chief Minister Siddaramaiah landed at the wrong helipad on Sunday due to an error of judgement on the part of the pilot, leaving officials supposed to welcome the CM in a spot of bother.

The CM was visiting the town to take part in the wedding of the grandson of former minister Amaregouda Patil Bayyapur and son of MLC Sharanagouda Patil Bayyapur.

An helipad had been prepared for the choppers of the CM and deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar to land at Srinivas Layout on Raichur Road here.

As per protocol, the deputy commissioner and the district superintendent of police were at the designated place to receive the CM.

Siddaramaiah's chopper ended up landing at the helipad belonging to MLA Manappa Vajjal on Kalaburagi Road, where the helicopter of Minister Satish Jarkiholi was supposed to land.

Here, a vehicle was waiting to ferry the minister along with an escort vehicle.

The chief minister was enraged that none of the officials or people's representatives were present to receive him. He then left for the venue of the wedding in a separate vehicle.

Getting news of the faux pas on the part of the pilot, the DC and the SP rushed to the helipad where Siddaramaiah had landed, only to find that the CM had left.

Police personnel offered CM the customary salute when the CM returned to the helipad, after taking part in the wedding ceremony.

With Siddaramaiah landing at the helipad on Kalaburagi Road, the chopper carrying Jarkiholi went around in the sky thrice following an alert regarding the faux pas, before it could land at the facility where the CM's helicopter was to land.

Alliance looks for corporate funds in big cat conservation

BENGALURU, DHNS:

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) will focus on bringing corporate funds for the conservation of habitats that support tigers, leopards, cheetah and others.

Speaking after the inauguration of a technical course, director (programmes) of IBCA Soumitra Dasgupta said IBCA would play the dual role of highlighting India's conservation stories as well as facilitating funding of green projects.

He pointed to the limited government fundings (less than 1% of GDP) and said pooling in resources from private sector will help corporations in species and landscape conservation, capacity building and protecting biodiversity.

Dasgupta said they would reach out to Green Climate Fund or other arms of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, to bring in international finance for conservation.

Asked about possible conflict of interest in getting funds from corporates, sources in IBCA said steps would be taken to ensure that only companies that do not have such antecedents will participate in the programme.

WII study to inform new linear infra policy

As linear projects come under focus due to rising man-animal conflict, especially death of elephants and tigers, learnings from the animal underpasses and overpasses built in Pench Tiger Reserve (Maharashtra) are set to play a major role by informing about key elements of the new version of the linear project policy.

Soumitra Dasgupta said the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) was conducting a study on the role of such infrastructure in mitigating impact of projects on big cats.

"The previous policy on linear projects will be updated to include best practices and the learnings from the success in Pench," he said.

Asked about details of the success story from Pench, Dasgupta said WII was still studying it.

"Linear infrastructures degrade corridor. At the same time, they are essential for the development of a country like India. Keeping this in mind, the new policy will come up with win-win measures that are going to balance both sides, based on inputs from WII," he said.

WII director Gobind Sagar Bhardwaj could not be reached for comment.

Technical course

As many as 38 participants from 23 countries have arrived to take part in the course from February 9-13, in conservation to be held in Bandipur and Nagarahole tiger reserves.

Manoj Kumar, principal secretary, forest department, said the course was being conducted in a landscape which was currently facing multiple challenges. From habitat degradation to people's participation in conservation, all aspects of challenges faced by the field officers will be studied amid sessions from resource persons, he added.

Farmer associations see red over potential import of food products from US

BENGALURU, DHNS

Farmer associations have raised serious concerns over the joint statement issued on the interim agreement of the US-India trade deal, criticising the government for opening the door for the potential import of genetically modified (GM) food products.

In a statement to media, Kirankumar Vissa, Kavitha Kuruganti and others from Alliance for Sustainable and Holistic Agriculture (ASHA-Kisan Swaraj) rejected the Centre's claim that 'agriculture was protected' and said the interim agreement amounts to "first round of opening" of Indian agriculture sector to be followed by much more. "The elimination of tariffs on imports of 'a wide range of US food and agricultural products' will depress domestic prices, undermine Indian farmers, horticulturists, and oilseed growers, distort feed and livestock markets, and increase dependence on imports," it said.

To hurt farmers

They said import of dried distillers grains (DDGs) and red sorghum will impact millions of farmers growing maize, jowar, soybean and other crops used for fodder and feed for animals and poultry. The import of soybean oil will hurt a similar number of farmers already facing a crisis given that weighted average of market price for soybean in the country was 26% lower than minimum support price of Rs 5,328.

It could lead to import of genetically modified items, they say

Secondly, ASHA questioned move to allow import of GM food and feed products, particularly soybean oil. "The joint statement says, 'India also agrees to address long-standing non-tariff barriers to trade in US food and agricultural products'.

This is coded language for lifting long-standing restrictions on GM food crops and products that have been in place in India, among other non-tariff barriers," it added.

ASHA dubbed Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal's assurance that 'processed items' would not have 'GM effects' unscientific and opportunistic. The statement noted that each product required its own biosafety assessment, while pointing to the statutory regulatory framework.

"The government in effect is saying it will flout domestic laws made by Parliament of India, our elected representatives, to please the Trump administration. This is a blatant bowing down, a throwing away of citizens" interests," it added.

Bold climate targets mask weak action across corporate India

BENGALURU, DHNS

How serious are Indian companies about reducing carbon emissions?

A study of 33 companies across six high-emitting sectors by the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) finds that ambitions are rarely translated into accountable targets and actions.

The IEEFA report examined companies from power, steel, cement, chemicals, commodities, and oil and gas to assess how clearly they define their strategic ambition for a low-carbon transition, including plans to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and manage related risks and opportunities.

Of the 33 companies, 13 aligned their net-zero timelines with Paris-aligned horizons. Of these 13, eight do not specify scopes, undermining credibility.

"Overall, companies tend to present strategic ambition, decarbonisation levers and scenario analysis in isolation, creating a fragmented, often contradictory, picture of how they plan to achieve their wider GHG goals and how resilient their plans are," the study said.

However, it added that some sectors perform better on transition levers than on strategic ambition.

The report showed three major gaps in the transition.

First, ambitions are rarely translated into quantified, time-bound and financially integrated pathways.

Secondly, governance structures exist in form, but are weak in substance, with limited accountability, capacity building and incentive alignment to drive execution.

Thirdly, disclosures remain fragmented and backward looking, with inadequate Scope 3 (indirect emissions) coverage, weak scenario analysis and limited assurance.

"Only a limited number link their goals to capital expenditure plans, revenue assumptions or changes in business strategy, making it difficult for investors and lenders to assess the feasibility of transition pathways," said Shantanu Srivastava, research lead, sustainable finance and climate risk, South Asia.

Gaps in implementation

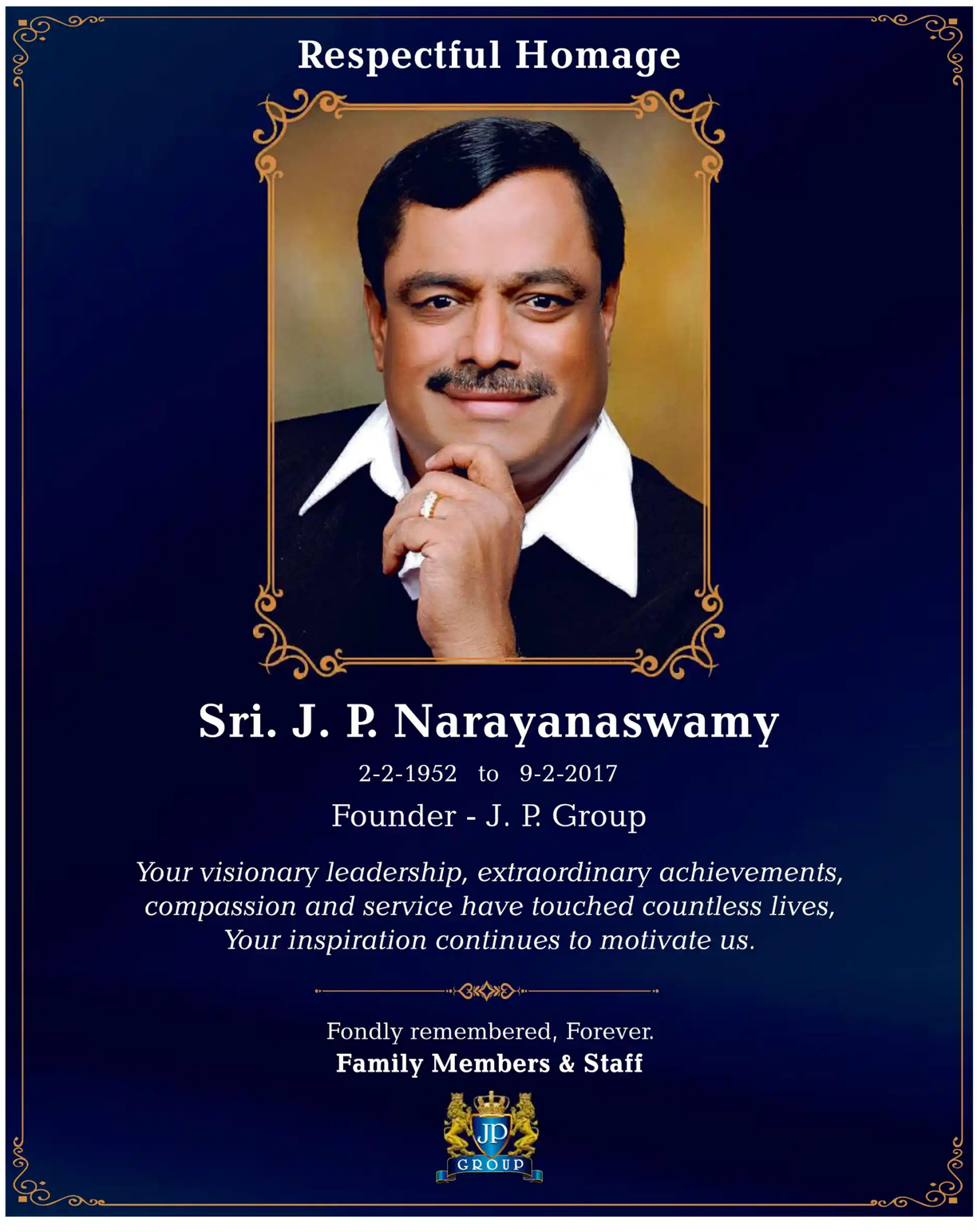
While most companies had established environmental, social and governance (ESG) oversight structures, the arrangements remained largely procedural and have yet to translate into clear accountability, incentive alignment or execution capacity for delivering climate transition objectives.

Only 10 companies, primarily large-cap firms, appointed dedicated key management personnel, and only nine established a sustainability committee. Small and mid-cap firms typically lack internal ESG functions, resulting in weak oversight.

Further, an analysis of specific metrics and targets related to implementation strategy revealed the "weakest link" in corporate transition planning, as metrics and targets remain the most neglected component across all sectors. Weak financial integration and company policies lack specific guidance on climate risk, opportunities, or emissions reduction.

Lastly, third party verification of greenhouse gas inventory practices is still evolving. As a result, the verification process is limited.

The study recommended updating Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) guidance to embed transition planning elements, incorporate sector-specific guidance and templates, introduce integrated transition plan-specific metrics and ensure coherence with other regulatory policy instruments, among others.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Recruitments, vehicles & police housing on home dept's Budget wish list

BENGALURU, DHNS: Home Minister G Parameshwara said on Sunday that he had sought permission for staff recruitment and replacement of vehicles for his department in the upcoming 2026-27 state Budget.

He told reporters, "Firstly, I have sought permission for recruitment. Secondly, mobility is important for the police. The union government has mandated that vehicles cannot be used after 15 years of their life. Based on this, we have phased out thousands of vehicles. They need to be replaced at least. I have requested for that. We need housing for the police".

Parameshwara said Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had appreciated the 'police griha' scheme of the home department. "There are other issues like cyber crime and tackling menace of drugs. We have sought grants for that," he said.

When asked whether the AI-driven software costing Rs 67 crore which was planned to be procured was necessary, the home minister said cybercrime and ill-effects of social media were increasing. The software was needed to tackle them, the home minister said.

"Businesses worth thousands of crores have been spoilt. There are a lot of issues concerning hate crimes too. To control all this, the software is needed. Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have spent way more on it. They have spent Rs 200 crore to Rs 300 crore," he added.

Masterplan to protect eco-sensitive zones in sanctuaries

Sanctuaries see repeated violation of the ESZ rules

CHIRANJEEVI KULKARNI
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Forest Department has finally moved to fix the gaps in the management of about 45 protected areas in Karnataka by seeking master plans to manage the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of such areas.

The protected areas consist of wildlife sanctuaries and tiger reserves. For sanctuaries, ESZs notified under Environment (Protection) Act provide a shock-absorbing effect by regulating human activities by a monitoring committee. In tiger reserves, the buffer zone is notified and managed as per the tiger conservation plan of Wildlife (Protection) Act. Some sanctuaries that gave birth to tiger reserves, for instance Bhadra, have ESZs that stretch the buffer zone.

Senior officials in the department said while the tiger reserves enjoy better security, the sanctuaries see repeated violation of the ESZ rules due to the problems associated with the commercial activities which have mushroomed in the last two decades.

"As Nagarahole-Bandipur landscape got saturated, we have seen an increasing number of commercial activities in the ESZs of sanctuaries spread across Kodagu, Chikkamagaluru and Shivamogga landscape in recent years. The department has not been able to regulate them effectively," an official noted.

Senior officials in the Forest department say while the tiger reserves enjoyed better security, the sanctuaries see repeated violation of the ESZ rules due to the problems associated with the commercial activities which have mushroomed in the last two decades.
DH FILE PHOTO FOR REPRESENTATION

No ZMP till now

Sources said none of the sanctuaries has Zonal Master Plan (ZMP) though the state government is duty-bound to prepare the same within two years from the date of the publication of the ESZ notification.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that many sanctuaries do not even have ESZ and are only protected due to the Supreme Court order on the default ESZ.

To a question, the official pointed to the procedure for preparing the ZMP. "It's not a document prepared by the Forest Department unilaterally. The ZMP should be prepared in consultation with Revenue, urban development, rural development, agriculture, panchayat raj, tourism, PWD and others. This is a process that requires a lot of planning and discussions, if the ZMP has to be comprehensive and effective," he said.

The ESZ monitoring committees, headed by the regional commissioners, have to take up the consultation with the other departments to finalise the master plan. The entire exercise has to be coordinated by the Environment Department.

DH reached out to Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) Kumar Pushkar for a comment. The officer acknowledged the challenge. "The department has recently flagged the issue. I will take it up again with the government for necessary directions to the department concerned," Pushkar said.

Secretary, Environment Department, Srinivasulu was not available for a comment.

Diversify crops, adopt integrated farming to double income: Minister

Reduce evaluation period for new varieties, hybrids, says Chouhan

BENGALURU, DHNS

Emphasising that integrated farming was the only way to bolster the financial health of small-scale agriculturists, Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday called for a strategic shift towards horticulture and crop diversification to ensure sustainability and national nutritional security.

Speaking during his visit to the ICAR-Indian Institute of Horticultural Research (IIHR) at Hesaraghatta here, he noted that the synergy between crop husbandry, animal husbandry, fisheries and beekeeping was vital for farmers to maximise earnings.

"We must make our country self-sufficient in the production of fruits, flowers and vegetables," Chouhan said, addressing a gathering of scientists, farmers and incubatees.

He urged the scientific community to focus on developing varieties with longer shelf lives, a move he believes will directly translate into higher market value and better returns for growers.

Chouhan suggested reducing the evaluation period for new varieties and hybrids under the All India Coordinated Research Project systems. He stressed that "inventing technologies that increase income" must remain the primary goal of agricultural research.

Marking his visit, Chouhan planted an 'Arka Udaya' mango sapling at the institute's fruit crops nursery.

The visit concluded with a high-level meeting with directors of various Bengaluru-based ICAR institutes, with the minister emphasising the need to intensify farmer training programmes to bridge the gap between laboratory research and field implementation.

Rotary District 3192 conclave 'Vismaya' spotlights leadership & service

BENGALURU, DHNS: Over 1,500 Rotarians gathered at Clark's Exotica over the weekend for 'Vismaya', the annual conference of Rotary International District 3192.

The two-day conclave, which concluded on Sunday, focused on leadership dialogue, service initiatives and strategies for community transformation.

Held under the leadership of District Governor Elizabeth Cherian, the conference reflected its theme 'Vismaya' — symbolising wonder and excellence — through sessions aimed at scaling humanitarian impact.

Elizabeth outlined a roadmap for the remainder of the Rotary year, emphasising sustainable initiatives in healthcare, education and environmental conservation.

The event featured global and national speakers, including Infosys co-founder SD Shibulal and global humanitarian leader Madhusudan Sai.

Representing the Rotary International President, Past District Governor Alex Nyaga of Nairobi joined other dignitaries such as Rotary International Director Flt Lt KP Nagesh and Major General Vinod Tom Mathew.

Addressing the gathering, Shibulal and other corporate leaders spoke on aligning corporate social responsibility with Rotary's volunteer-driven model. Sessions also featured insights from Lt Gen Arun Ananthanarayanan and corporate leader DG Balaji Rao.

The conclave included cultural performances by cine actor Sunder Raj and artistes Shruti Bide and Aishwarya Nityananda. Outstanding clubs and individual Rotarians were recognised for their contributions to welfare projects across the district.

"Vismaya has strengthened the spirit of collaboration and will act as a catalyst for sustainable impact across the district," Elizabeth said at the valedictory session.

Dignitaries at 'Vismaya,' the annual conference of Rotary International District 3192. The two-day event concluded on Sunday.

SOMANATH BECKONS MYSURU

A replica of Gujarat's Sri Somanath temple erected on the occasion of 90th anniversary of Prajapita Brahmakumari Ishwariya Vishwavidyalaya, in Mysuru on Sunday. DH PHOTO/ANUP RAGH T

Nilgai dies of bacterial infection at Gadag zoo

GADAG, DHNS

A nilgai at Binkadakatti mini zoo near here died of a bacterial infection on February 3. Medical examination confirmed that haemorrhagic septicemia was responsible for the death of the antelope.

Since haemorrhagic septicemia is a highly contagious bacterial disease, all precautions have been taken in the zoo. Following the death of nilgai, an emergency meeting of the health advisory committee was convened. It was decided in the meeting to close the enclosures of spotted deer and antelopes for one week, RFO of zoo Sneha Koppal told *DH*.

No deaths have been reported since the death of a nilgai to a bacterial infection on February 3. The deer species in the zoo are being monitored. Preventive treatment and supplements are being given to them.

The enclosure of deer/nilgai at Binkadakatti mini zoo near Gadag has been closed for visitors following the death of a nilgai due to a bacterial infection on February 3.

More than two dozen blackbucks and four spotted deer had died of haemorrhagic septicemia in Belagavi zoo and Davangere zoo, respectively, in the past three months.

Claims of bullet trains helping state a blatant lie: KPCC

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) on Sunday slammed Union Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw's statement that bullet trains would benefit Karnataka as a "blatant lie".

In a press statement, KPCC media and communication department chairperson Ramesh Babu said only two of the projects announced in the budget passed through Karnataka (Bengaluru-Chennai and Bengaluru-Hyderabad).

"Projects like Ahmedabad–Mumbai, Delhi–Varanasi and Mumbai–Nagpur do not include Karnataka in any manner. In such a situation, claiming benefits to Karnataka is false propaganda and insult to intelligence of Kannadigas," Babu, an MLC, said.

Claiming several major railway projects proposed during the tenure of AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge's tenure as railway minister had not been implemented by the Centre, he felt Karnataka had been "systematically neglected".

He took exception to Minister of State for Railways V Somanna's absence in Saturday's press conference, saying it exposed "BJP's internal groupism".

"Somanna, who represents Karnataka, was deliberately not invited. This is not mere procedural lapse. It exposes BJP's internal groupism and deliberate sidelining of Karnataka leaders".

Babu urged Vaishnaw to issue an apology to the people of Karnataka.

Mini aircraft crashes in Vijayapura district, pilots eject

VIJAYAPURA, DHNS: Two pilots - an instructor & a cadet - had a close shave when a mini aircraft nosedived into an open field at Mangalur in Babaleshwar taluk of the district on Sunday.

"Capt Kunal Malhotra, assistant flight instructor at Redbird Aviation, & trainee pilot Goutham Shankar P R ejected before aircraft crashed. They suffered injuries and were rushed to a hospital in Vijayapura.

The mishap occurred when the aircraft was flying to Belagavi from Kalaburagi. More details awaited," Vijayapura Superintendent of Police Laxman Nimbargi told reporters.

Civil aviation ministry said, "Redbird Flying Training Academy Limited's Cessna 172 Aircraft, VT-EUC (MSN-17265717), made forced landing in a field near Bagalkot, 100 km east of Belagavi airport".

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DIGGING THE PAST

Archaeologists stumble upon 2nd human skeleton from 'New Stone Age' at Tekkalakote

TEKKALAKOTE (BALLARI DISTRICT), DHNS

The archaeologists have stumbled upon another human skeleton, estimated to be around 3,500 years to 5,000 years old, during the ongoing excavation at the hillocks of Tekkalakote.

The archaeologists continued to dig deep at Gowdrumoole Betta in the town after they discovered a human skeleton a couple of days back. On Saturday, they stumbled upon yet another human skeleton, said to be from the New Stone Age era.

The skeletons discovered at the site are in excellent condition.

"A massive stone was found lying on the chest of the second human skeleton discovered at the site. Since removing the stone would damage the first human skeleton, we have left it as it is, Namitha S Sugandhi, professor of Hartwick College, New York, who is leading the excavation, told reporters.

"The region, which has a history of about 3,500 years to 5,000 years, is fit for research. There is a major Iron Age site at Boodi Dibba near Jakkeru Gudda. A thorough study would help better understand the prehistoric period. The administration should take steps to protect and preserve them," she added.

The team from the US college has found some weapons used in the Neolithic (New Stone Age) at Gowdrumoole Betta hillock.

"These weapons were possibly used for hunting or to peel skin. Massive piles of stones found here lend credence to the possibility of a human settlement," Namitha Sugandhi said.

Prof Ravi Korishettar, a renowned archaeologist, told *DH*. "The excavation site at Tekkalakote sheds light on the humans of the New Stone Age period, estimated to be around 4,000 years back. The discoveries show that the humans of the said period were majorly an agrarian community. They had a unique burial practice. The elders and the prestigious people were given special burials in house pits, using big pots."

The human skeletons, pots and other toll/items discovered during the excavation conducted by M S Nagaraj Rao in 1964-65 are being exhibited at Deccan College Museum in Pune, Prof Korishettar said.

A human skeleton, second in as many days, believed to be from the New Stone Age, was discovered during excavation at a hillock in Tekkalakote, Ballari district.

Deputy Director of Hampi-Kamalapur Archaeological Museums and Heritage department, R Shejeshwara, along with a team of archaeologists, inspects an excavated site.

Deputy Director of Hampi-Kamalapur Archaeological Museums and Heritage department and Director of the excavation team R Shejeshwara on Saturday visited the excavation site and inspected the human skeletons discovered at the site.

"The skeletons found at the site are said to be from the New Stone Age period. Though they are estimated to be around 3,000 years to 5,000 years old, the exact period would be confirmed only after carbon dating test," Shejeshwara said.

Bengaluru has 64 deadly stretches: Traffic cops

Black spots, Page ?

KR Pura follows closely with four lethal locations, primarily concentrated on NH-75, such as the Bhattarahalli to Medahalli bridge, Bescom Office, KR Puram to Bus Depo Junction Old Madras Road, Avalahalli, opposite the Toyota Showroom and the Katamnallur cross.

What's a black spot?

Speaking to *DH*, Joint Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Karthik Reddy said, "A black spot is a 500m stretch where three or more fatal accidents have occurred in the last three years."

He noted that the identification is an ongoing process involving joint inspections by the RTO, police, and road owners like NHAI or GBA after every fatal crash to identify engineering defects.

For those navigating these stretches, "crossing the road near Babusapalya is fraught with danger," said Anitha Kumari, a regular commuter.

"There is no separation between high-speed vehicles and pedestrians heading to the bus stand."

Resident Welfare Associations' (RWAs) in North Bengaluru have echoed these concerns, pointing to the Jakkur Flyover and Palanahalli Gate as 'death traps' due to poor lighting and high-speed traffic.

"The NHAI response has been very poor despite these stretches being most accident-prone," Reddy noted.

While authorities claim six spots were permanently rectified last year, five new locations have been added to the 2025 watchlist due to changing traffic patterns and the conversion of village roads into city roads.

'Law prohibits bigamy': SC quashes rape case by married advocate

Physical relations on a promise to marry not rape in every case

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court, while quashing a rape case lodged by a married woman advocate against a lawyer for repeated rape on the false promise of marriage, said that the law prohibited bigamous unions, and disallowed parties from entering into a second marriage during the subsistence of their first marriage.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan emphasised that the mere fact that the parties indulged in physical relations pursuant to a promise to marry would not amount to rape in every case.

Allowing an appeal by Pramod Kumar Navratna against the Chhattisgarh High Court's 2025 judgment that refused to quash an FIR against him, the court found that the allegation of rape on false pretext of marriage, even when taken on its face value, did not amount to rape, and hence was not liable for punishment under Section 376(2)(n) of the IPC.

The 33-year-old woman advocate, with a 10-year-old son, alleged that she came into contact with the appellant during the pendency of divorce proceedings, and he repeatedly raped her on the promise of marriage, and even impregnated her.

In a judgment on February 5, however, the court opined that if indeed there was a false promise of marriage based on which the accused-appellant indulged in sexual activities, such a promise would not be legally enforceable or even capable of being acted upon as the victim herself was not eligible for marriage, neither on the date of the first alleged act of offence—September 18, 2022—nor on any subsequent dates wherein the parties indulged in the sexual activities, till the point of the date of registration of FIR: February 6, 2025.

The court noted subclause (i) of Section 5 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, categorically prohibited marriage between two individuals if either of them had a living spouse. That position was reiterated under subclause (i) of Section 4 of the Special Marriage Act, 1954.

The bench highlighted that courts would have to be extremely careful and cautious in identifying genuine cases filed under Section 376(2)(n) of the IPC by identifying the essential ingredients to constitute the offence: a promise of marriage made by the accused solely with a view to obtain consent for sexual relations and without having any intent of fulfilling said promise from the very beginning.

Unnao rape: SC likely to hear Sengar's plea today

NEW DELHI, PTI: The Supreme Court is likely to hear on Monday expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar's plea seeking bail in the custodial death case of the Unnao rape survivor's father.

On January 19, the Delhi High Court had refused to suspend Sengar's 10-year jail term in the case on the grounds of delay in trial, saying it was partly caused by the multiple applications he had filed in the matter.

On March 13, 2020, Sengar was sentenced to 10 years of rigorous imprisonment by a trial court, along with a fine of Rs 10 lakh, in the case.

The trial court had said "no leniency" could be shown for killing a family's "sole bread earner".

The trial court, which did not hold the accused guilty of murder in the father's case, awarded him the maximum sentence for the offence of culpable homicide not amounting to murder after holding that there was no intention to kill.

Sengar's appeals in the main rape case against the December 2019 judgement convicting him and sentencing him to imprisonment for the remainder of his life, as well as the father's case, are pending in the high court.

His sentence was suspended by the high court on December 23, 2025, till the pendency of his appeal challenging his conviction and sentence in the rape case.

The Supreme Court stayed the suspension on December 29, 2025.

HAMPI DECKED UP FOR UTSAV

An electrical illumination welcomes visitors to Hampi Utsav at Hampi in Vijayanagar district on Sunday. The Utsav begins in the historic town on Feb 13. DH PHOTO/LAVA K

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, interacts with NRI students from the UAE, in New Delhi. PTI

Nothing in life linear, be flexible: Rahul's message to Gen Z

I am judged all the time, and I really don't care about the judgment

NEW DELHI, DHNS

Don't be scared of others being judgmental about you, and what truly matters is staying truthful to yourself while doing the right thing, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi told a group of NRI students as they discussed anxiety and other issues among youth.

During the interaction, a video of which was shared on Rahul's YouTube channel, some of them shared how they feel anxious about not being confident enough, being judged, insecurity and not always feeling comfortable in speaking out after the Congress leader posed the question.

Sharing the video, Rahul said a central theme of the conversation was how society often attempts to define individuals through labels and assumptions. "The message was clear: while the world may try to tell you who you are, what truly matters is staying truthful to yourself. My message to Gen Z is simple: Nothing in life is linear. Be flexible and persevere," he said.

As the students spoke about it, Rahul said it appears that the judging disturbs you. "Maybe society wants you to feel anxious and uncomfortable," he said.

"I am judged all the time, and I really don't care about the judgment... My thinking is that I have to be doing the right thing. There will always be people who do not like you," he said.

Asked what values he considers the most important, Rahul replied truth and non-violence. "Don't be violent to others or yourself. Be truthful to others and yourself. Nothing else is required," he said.

On his definition of success, Rahul told the students that it is being comfortable in any situation, navigating life with love and affection for others. "I may be the powerful person, I may be the richest, and if I don't have respect for people around me... that is not success," he said.

He said nothing in life will go in a straight line, and flexibility and perseverance are the two qualities one needs.

Suspense ends, metro fare hike on hold

Metro fare, from Page 1

Neither the state nor BMRCL has the legal authority to override or disregard these recommendations, he had noted.

Bangalore South MP L S Tejasvi Surya and Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly R Ashoka subsequently announced that the Centre had put the hike on hold.

Wearing a T-shirt printed with excerpts from the FFC report, Surya visited the RV Road metro station on Sunday and stated that the hike had been deferred.

BMRCL, however, maintained it had not received official communication and that the hike would go ahead as announced. As suspense lingered, BMRCL received directions from the ministry on Sunday evening, asking to defer the hike. Well-placed sources said the ministry's directive could support the state's claim that it has no role on the fares and that the Centre has the final say.

Surya, however, disagreed. Speaking to *DH*, he pinned the blame on the state.

"The scheme of fare fixation is clear. It is the state that requests the constitution of the FFC. The committee considers submissions from the state and BMRCL, and then decides the fare," he stated.

"They were the ones who asked for such a high increase, citing weak finances and the inability to continue the Shadow Cash Support (SCS) that earlier governments were providing. Because of this, the fares increased, and the recommendation is binding. That is how this problem started.

"What the minister (Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs Manohar Lal Khattar) has done now is to exercise ministerial oversight and ask for the hike to be put on hold temporarily until a solution is found."

The BJP MP said the chief minister had last year asked for a reduction in fares. "If today they say fares are controlled only by the Union government, then what authority did the CM exercise earlier?"

He demanded that the CM write to the Centre seeking reconstitution of the FFC.

"We are not opposing reasonable fare hikes. Operational costs have gone up, and nobody is saying fares should remain at 2010 or 2015 levels. But public transport must remain affordable. Fare revision should be done in a scientific manner by the FFC, in consultation with commuters and experts," Surya added.

Independent mobility expert Satya Arikutharam, who has researched the issue, said BMRCL acted in "bad faith" throughout.

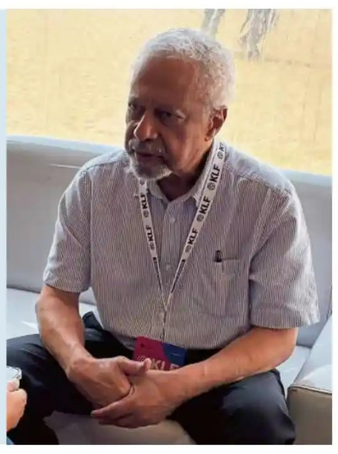
"It made fare implementation errors and moved to an altogether different system while correcting it. Fares are now based on stations travelled as opposed to the earlier distance travelled," he noted.

Bridges over silences: Nobel laureate Gurnah on power of the novel

INTERVIEW

Nobel laureate Abdulrazak Gurnah believes literature can challenge colonial narratives without being burdened by notions of "responsibility". Known for his poignant explorations of the immigrant experience and the lingering shadows of colonialism, Gurnah spoke to *DH*'s **Ashwin B M** on history, displacement, and what writing means to him after global recognition.

> Historians are already doing a specific kind of job visiting, revisiting, and challenging received narratives.
> But let's be honest, not everybody reads historians. Historical fiction, when it works, bridges the gap between scholarly research and popular knowledge.
>
> **ABDULRAZAK GURNAH**
> Nobel laureate



How does writing help reclaim histories that have been effectively erased or distorted by colonial narratives?

Historians are already doing a specific kind of job visiting, revisiting, and challenging received narratives. But let's be honest, not everybody reads historians. Historical fiction, when it works, bridges the gap between scholarly research and popular knowledge. By doing this, literature challenges entrenched ideas about colonialism and, perhaps more importantly, about how we live in the aftermath.

When writing about such heavy themes as trauma and displacement, what specific responsibility does a novelist carry?

I don't think a novelist has a "responsibility" in that sense. People write because they feel moved to do so. To talk about responsibility is to put a burden on the writer. My view is: Let the writer write whatever they want. We shouldn't prescribe what they "must" do. The freedom to write is essential.

Do you feel that global literature still privileges certain voices over others?

Possibly, and that is tied to history, language, and the mechanics of the market. It is undoubtedly harder for someone writing in a place without a robust publishing infrastructure or in a minority language. However, my feeling is that nothing is truly lost. You might not be read globally right now, but someone might discover a text centuries later from a small village in Nepal and bring it to light. If you're lucky, you're known now, if not, someone will find you later.

Has the Nobel Prize fundamentally changed your relationship with writing?

It means my work is now better known and much more available, which is a gift. But does it change the actual writing or the internal process of creation? Not at all. The work remains the work.

After years of movement and memory, what does the concept of "home" mean to you today?

I now have two homes. I live in England, and I have the home I belong to, which is Zanzibar. This isn't unusual nowadays, perhaps it never was. When people move, they make a home in a new place, but they don't lose the original one.

What advice would you give to younger writers from the Global South approaching the art of storytelling?

Write as truthfully as you can. You don't come to writing because of an obligation. You do it because you want to say something. Whether you are from the Global South or the Global North, you should have the freedom to write about whatever you choose. It is then up to the readers to decide what they want to engage with.

Mandya to get automotive research centre

MYSURU, DHNS

Union Minister of Heavy Industries and Steel H D Kumaraswamy announced that an Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI) centre will be established at his Mandya Lok Sabha constituency at a cost of Rs 500 crore.

Addressing a press meet in Mysuru on Sunday, HDK said, "ARAI project requires 100 acres of land. I have personally written to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah requesting to allocate land. The chief minister has not responded till now. On January 21, the Additional Chief Secretary of the Revenue Department has written to the Mandya Deputy Commissioner, directing to identify suitable land. The government should allot the land without delay."

He said the funds for the project have already been earmarked in the Union Budget. In the first phase, Rs 500 crore will be invested, and more investments will follow.

CHAMUNDESHWARI ELECTRICITY SUPPLY CORPORATION LIMITED
(A Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Corporate Office, CESC, Mysuru-570017, Phone: 0821-2343384
Email ID: gmhrd@cescmysore.org, Website: www.cescmysore.org
Company Identity Number (CIN): U40109KA2004SGC035177

No.CESC/A&HR/02/JPM-1/2025-26(Counselling)/35844 Date: 06.02.2026

NOTIFICATION

In pursuance to Employment Notification dated 14.10.2024 and Final Selection Lists published on 13.11.2025, for the posts of **Junior Powerman (NKK)** in CESC, the counselling process for issuing appointment orders to the selected candidates is scheduled to be held on **20.02.2026** at **Corporate Office, No.29, Vijayanagara, 2nd Stage, Hinkal, Mysore - 570017**. For more details please visit **Recruitment link** in CESC website **https://cescmysore.karnataka.gov.in.**

Sd/- General Manager (A & HR),
Corporate Office, CESC, Mysuru.

DIPR/MYSORE/1630/Shirdi Sai/2025-26

India, Malaysia call for zero tolerance on terror

Modi, from Page 1

The two sides announced several pacts, including MoUs for cooperation in areas like combating and preventing corruption and disaster management, and an agreement on audio-visual co-production.

"In the field of security, we will strengthen cooperation in counter-terrorism, intelligence sharing, and maritime security. We will also further expand defence cooperation," Modi said after his meeting with Ibrahim.

"Alongside AI and digital technologies, we will advance our partnership in semiconductors, health, and food security," said the prime minister.

The two prime ministers unequivocally and strongly condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including cross-border terrorism, according to a joint statement issued after the meeting.

They called for zero tolerance of terrorism and for concerted international efforts to combat terrorism in a comprehensive and sustained manner. They agreed to counter radicalisation and violent extremism; combat financing of terrorism; prevent use of new and emerging technologies for terrorist purposes, through cooperation in information and knowledge sharing, exchange of best practices and capacity building. They noted the linkages between terrorism and transnational organised crime, and agreed to cooperate in the area of transnational organised crime, including through the sharing of information and best practices.

"The social security agreement for the protection of Indian workers in Malaysia, the gratis e-visa for tourism, and the implementation of the UPI digital payment interface in Malaysia will all make the lives of citizens of both countries easier," Modi said as he and Ibrahim jointly addressed the media persons. "After all, any partnership truly succeeds with strength when its benefits reach people directly."

Ibrahim lauded India's spectacular rise in the international economic and trade scene and described the decision to use local currencies for bilateral trade as remarkable.

Department of Health & Family Welfare
KARNATAKA STATE BLOOD TRANSFUSION COUNCIL
Arogya Soudha, Magadi Road 1st Cross, Leprosy Hospital Premises, Bengaluru - 560023.
Phone 080-29557022/21 Email: ddbloodsafety.ksaps@gmail.com

KSBTC/BTS/08/2025-26 Date: 03.02.2026

NOTIFICATION

Subject : Walk -In- Interview for the various contractual posts.
Reference:ಕರಾಏಪ್ರಿಸೊ/ಬಿಎಸ್/14/2025-26, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 31-01-2026.

The Karnataka State Blood Transfusion Council (KSBTC) invites eligible candidates for Walk In interview for the various vacant contractual posts for Blood Safety Programme. Guidelines, Salary and other details are published in **https://ksaps.karnataka.gov.in.** Walk – In Interview has been scheduled on **18.02.2026 @ 11.00 AM,** at the office of Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society, 4th Floor East wing, Arogya Soudha, Magadi Road, 1st Cross, Bengaluru-560023.

Sd/-
Director,
Karnataka State Blood Transfusion Council, Bengaluru.

DIPR/CP/5503/KAVITA/2025-26

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Restore dignity of legislative debate

The suspension of BJP MLC C T Ravi for a day, following his refusal to apologise for a remark that indirectly questioned the nationality of Congress member Naseer Ahmed, is a stark reminder of the abysmal depths to which legislative debate in Karnataka has sunk. Even after Ahmed expressed regret over his comments against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Ravi repeatedly defied the Chair. The episode is especially troubling because it is not an aberration. Barely a year ago, Ravi was at the centre of a far graver controversy over his alleged obscene remarks against minister Laxmi Hebbalkar, and that too on the floor of the House. However, the rot is not confined to one individual or party. The outburst by Shivalinge Gowda (Congress) in the Assembly—replete with abusive language, use of disrespectful singular pronouns, and personal attacks on family members—underscores how debates have degenerated into cheap, street-level exchanges.

Policy has been replaced by provocation, and argument by abuse. This slide marks a tragic departure from the Karnataka legislature's finest traditions. The Assembly and Council once functioned as genuine temples of democracy, where command over the rulebook and adherence to fact and reason carried more weight than decibel levels. Leaders came prepared, often speaking for hours with scholarly precision, armed with data, documents and legal precedence. Wit, not vulgarity, was the preferred weapon; a cutting metaphor could expose a policy failure without diminishing personal dignity. Slurs were unthinkable, and linguistic discipline—including respectful forms of address—was integral to the institution's culture. Debate was treated with the seriousness of a courtroom and the rigour of a university seminar. The contrast with today's brawl-like proceedings points not merely to bad behaviour, but to a deeper erosion of institutional values.

Leaders who lapse into foul language disgrace democracy

There is an urgent necessity for the Karnataka legislature to reclaim the high standards of debate that were once its hallmark. This is no longer merely a question of decorum, but of democratic credibility. When debate gives way to communal insinuations, coarse language, and personalised hostility, the institution ceases to function as a forum for public reasoning. Allowing standards to sink to street-level rhetoric betrays a rich legacy and short-changes the electorate. Citizens are entitled to deliberation that advances policy, governance and public welfare. Restoring discipline and substance is therefore not as much about nostalgia and etiquette as about ensuring that the enormous cost of running the legislature is an investment in progress, and not an indulgence in political theatre. This is important especially at a time when faith in democratic institutions is under visible strain.

Good initiative to fix accident-prone roads

The Central government's decision to identify 18 high-risk highway corridors and focus on 100 accident-prone districts is a step forward in tackling the problem of road fatalities. It recognises that one big reason for accidents is the poor design of roads for which the government is more responsible than anybody else. The plan is part of a collaboration between the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and the NGO Save Life Foundation, and it aims to launch a data-driven zero-fatalities programme. Also, it is in line with the 2020 Stockholm Declaration on Road Safety, endorsed by the government, to reduce road fatalities by 50% by 2030. The programme, which covers nine districts of Karnataka, has already been launched. It is based on data collected from surveys conducted all over the country to identify reasons for road accidents.

The surveys found that 63% of road accidents in the country occur on roads other than national highways. The hazardous stretches and the timing of the accidents must be analysed in any attempt to reduce the number of accidents. Such roads need more attention than they receive at present. Poor road design and problems like inadequate lighting and signage make certain stretches accident-prone. The programme has a multi-pronged approach, including engineering audits and implementation of low-cost, quick-build safety interventions. Efficient trauma care response and measures for quick hospitalisation of injured persons, initiatives for community behaviour change and better co-ordination among various agencies are also part of the programme. Every district will have an accident prevention committee, involving various officials and people's representatives. The programme envisages a targeted approach, and its success will depend on effective implementation.

Poor engineering contributes to a significant number of fatalities

The ministry has also disclosed, in a communication to states, that over 70% of the 40.3 crore vehicles in the country are non-compliant with statutory norms. Over two-thirds of the non-compliant vehicle are two-wheelers. This means that a majority of vehicles don't have Pollution Under Control (PUC) certificates, fitness certificates, and insurance cover. The government intends to create a framework to automatically de-register vehicles that fail to adhere to statutory compliances. Strict measures are necessary to ensure that laws, rules and regulations are implemented, but the moot question is whether it is possible to implement them. A culture of non-compliance pervades the country. Even those who have the responsibility of enforcing rules violate them with impunity. This problem has to be addressed if we want to achieve positive results.

PRINCIPLES VACUUM

Making sense of India's 'strategic autonomy'

New Delhi wants to do business with all and not belong to any camp; it is non-alignment but without a moral component

PARSA VENKATESHWAR RAO JR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been on the hunt for new terms to mark the ideological shift from socialism and non-alignment movement of the Congress era to that of India-first nationalistic assertion of the BJP. So, the Planning Commission was decommissioned and the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog was set up.

On the foreign policy front, non-alignment, a fallout of Cold War politics, has been replaced by the concept of 'strategic autonomy'. Even as the change at the political helm from the Congress to the BJP was inevitable, other changes became necessary, too, as the ideological framework got replaced.

There has not been much scrutiny of either NITI Aayog or 'strategic autonomy'. It is time to do so. India is not yet fully a free market economy despite the much-vaunted liberalisation of 1991.

Governments, both at the Centre and in the states, continue to play an active role through policy measures as well as direct intervention through state-run schemes. Ease of doing business remains an ideal. Entrepreneurs still have to run through the gauntlet of approvals from authorities to start businesses. NITI Aayog still formulates plans and programmes in a desultory manner.

The change in foreign policy stance has been slower, and it still remains largely unclear. In many ways, strategic autonomy is another name for non-alignment.

India wants to do business with all, and it does not want to be part of any camp. India accepting membership of the Commonwealth with the British monarch as a symbolic head was a cultural gesture rather than strategic.

New Delhi is not particularly interested in identifying with the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). It is partially interested in BRICS and in G20, and it does not want military entanglement of any kind though it has signed up for Quad, comprising the United States, Japan, Australia and India.

India wants to go solo as much as possible. There is the added self-consciousness that India will soon be the third largest economy, after the United States and China. There is an innate ambition, which is natural, to become a superpower at some point. The 'Vishwaguru' is but a rationalised version of the desire for power and glory. Perhaps, it is easier for India to become a developed country – 'Viksit Bharat' – by 2047 than to become a superpower.

Athens in ancient Greece believed that its democratic political virtue is superior compared to other city polities in Greece. Rome, when it was a republic, established the fairness of the Roman political system where anyone coming under Roman dispensation is a citizen of the empire, an idea that revolutionary France had adopted. India does not

have an inspiring political ideal to offer the world.

India's political leaders are forced to fall back on pragmatism in international affairs. Nehru at the height of his popularity did not relish the idea of India as part of a large group.

The Bandung Afro-Asian conference of 1955 and the first NAM conference at Belgrade in 1961 were not his ideas. He was pulled in by leaders of other decolonised countries — Indonesia's Sukarno, Egypt's Nasser, Ghana's Nkrumah and Yugoslavia's Tito.

Nehru believed in India's own cultural superiority. But there was nothing much he could do about it. So, he remained friendly with the Americans, the British, and the Russians. The public sector steel plants created in collaboration with Germany in Rourkela, with the Soviets in Bhilai, and the British in Durgapur, the IITs and the IIMs with the Americans reflected ideological agnosticism.

India's critical stance towards the West in international affairs after Independence was a legacy of India's freedom movement with its anti-colonial flavour; it has less to do with the suspected leaning towards socialism and communism. S Gopal in his biography of Nehru notes the fact that Rajni Palme Dutt, the Indian communist leader in Britain, knew well that Nehru would not yield on democracy for the sake of communism. So, India's tepid stance of independence in foreign policy during the Congress era was not rooted in ideological predilection.

The same sense of pragmatism prevails now with the Modi-led BJP in power. The BJP from its years of Bharatiya Jan Sangh (BJS) was ideologically anti-communist and pro-American because of its anti-communism. Neither the BJS nor the BJP have any admiration for liberal democracy of America and the West. It was this opposition to communism that was behind its anti-China and anti-Russia stance. Russia has ceased to be communist, and China is communist only in name. Atal Bihari Vajpayee had no inhibitions and neither does Modi in getting close to Moscow and Beijing.

It is not surprising that the Modi government wants to deal with Washington, Moscow, Brussels equitably—buying oil from Russia, getting AI technology from America, a free trade agreement with the European Union (EU), and keeping the door to Chinese investments in India.

The government has to bend over backwards to explain and rationalise the blatantly one-sided trade deal that President Trump has recently forced on India. It has been rightly described as the least disadvantageous, with the implication that it could have been worse.

The Modi government is aware that it does not have much elbow room to stand up to Trump because of its relatively vulnerable economy.

Strategic autonomy does not seem to be anything distinct. It is India's old way of being on its own and safeguarding its national interest.

India is not willing to stick its neck out and say that the Russian invasion of Ukraine, or the killing of Palestinians in Gaza in the thousands, is morally unacceptable. South Africa has dared to file a case against Israel in the International Criminal Court (ICC), which India would never think of doing.

There is also the fact that India is not a signatory to the setting up of the ICC. But India could have spoken out against the indiscriminate killings of innocent people by Israel in Gaza. Democracy, freedom and the morality that goes with it is absent from India's foreign policy perspective.

One is reminded of the line from the film 'My Fair Lady' when the father of Eliza tells Prof. Higgins that he cannot afford morals. India cannot afford morals in its foreign policy.

(The writer is a Delhi-based journalist and commentator)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

When studios shaped memories

Sepia-toned images linger the longest

STANLEY CARVALHO

A flash decision by our son to have a family photograph clicked by a professional saw the four of us posing inside a photo studio recently. It was a rare visit in present times, triggering fond memories of yesteryears.

In the 1960s and 1970s, personal cameras were a luxury few could afford. For most families, the neighbourhood photo studio was the sole custodian of memories, delivering professionalism and permanence. Nearly every locality had one, typically run by a trained photographer.

The more established studios—such as G K Vale and G G Welling—were located centrally on M G Road. Their clientele ranged from local residents to families travelling across the city for special occasions: weddings, christenings, milestone birthdays, anniversaries and graduations. At times, the visit was for something as ordinary as a black-and-white passport photograph.

Smaller studios served their immediate neighbourhoods and bore a striking resemblance to one another. They were modest spaces with a waiting area whose walls displayed framed portraits. Glass cabinets held albums and boxes of Kodak and Fuji film rolls, while a small counter showcased sample prints in various sizes.

Beyond lay the studio—a dimly lit room furnished with a sofa or a few chairs, a curtain backdrop, and occasionally ornate Victorian-style furniture that lent an air of quiet elegance to photographs. The camera, large and immobile on its tripod, was surrounded by light stands, umbrellas and assorted equipment.

The ritual was efficient and familiar. The photographer offered a mirror, a comb, and sometimes a dab of talcum powder, then instructed you to adjust your chin or tilt your head. Lights were switched on, a smile gently coaxed, and the shutter clicked. In five or ten minutes it was done.

After paying an advance, one returned days later to collect the photographs and negatives—carefully preserved, allowing additional prints if needed. Films were processed manually in darkrooms, a slow and painstaking craft now largely forgotten.

A studio visit was almost obligatory for families. For us, it meant walking to Chandran's Studio in Cox Town or occasionally Stella or Sujan Studio on Wheeler Road. Dressed in our Sunday best—Father in a suit, Mother in a silk sari—we posed dutifully, urged into smiles.

The arrival of the mounted or framed photograph was eagerly awaited. One picture invariably claimed pride of place in the living room, becoming a talking point for visiting friends and relatives.

Photo studios documented all of life's milestones, joyful and sombre. Families posed with children displaying medals and trophies. At funerals, photographers recorded solemn gatherings in churches and cemeteries. Some studios even supplied neckties for those wishing to appear formal.

Today, many of these studios have vanished, overtaken by digital photography; others have adapted. The craft of manual film development has nearly disappeared, as have timeless black-and-white portraits. Yet, leafing through old albums, it is the monochrome and sepia-toned images that linger longest.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Urban India's thirsty reality

Apropos 'When water kills: The cracks in the urban supply story' (Feb 8), urban Indians struggle to access clean and safe drinking water despite infrastructure expansion. Rapid population growth, unplanned construction, and shrinking lakes have strained municipal supply systems. Ageing pipelines leak, contaminating water, while many neighbourhoods depend on private tankers with uncertain quality. Groundwater over-extraction has intensified fluoride, nitrate, and salinity contamination. Informal settlements suffer most, with irregular supply and limited storage options. Climate variability and weak regulation worsen the crisis. For millions, access to safe drinking water is an everyday anxiety. Immediate reforms and investments are urgently needed.

N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Potable water hazards

Regarding 'When water kills; The cracks in the urban supply story' (Feb 8), the feature highlights the risks of polluted drinking water. A recent Indore incident showed the devastating consequences. Civic authorities must ensure pipeline integrity and prevent sewage mixing with drinking water to safeguard public health. The Authorities concerned must work towards ensuring access to safe drinking water

C V Aravind, Bengaluru

Be fair about fares

The temporary hold on Bengaluru Metro's proposed fare hike offers momentary relief to daily commuters, but it also highlights the broader issue of inconsistent policymaking. Repeated uncertainty reflects poor planning and a lack of transparency in public transport policy. Rather than *ad hoc* decisions, authorities must prioritise fare stability, service quality, and meaningful public consultation. Affordable mobility is a necessity, not a privilege.

Laksha Jain, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

Communist ideology is an ideology indicative of destruction, and the country must get rid of it immediately... It does not exist in Tripura and Bengal. In Kerala, it is surviving to an extent; however, people have started the change from Thiruvananthapuram.

Amit Shah, Union Home Minister

It is not enough to succeed. Others must be labelled Communists.

Gore Vidal

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

André Béteille's enduring legacy

He broke away from viewing caste as the sole framework, highlighting instead new alignments shaped by economic and political forces

GOPA SABHARWAL

My association with Professor André Béteille, the renowned scholar who passed away on February 3, began in 1985 as a student-teacher relationship. It evolved into that of a researcher and guide as he supervised both my MPhil and PhD. Later, we became colleagues when I began teaching, and over the decades, our relationship became familial.

Of the many things I recall about Professor Béteille, foremost was his conviction that teaching was as important to an academic as research and writing. As a young academic eager to publish, I often complained that college work left me no time to write. Béteille would list the virtues of teaching as a practice that brought discipline into a life that could easily be scattered in many directions. Lecturing also sharpened one's ability to articulate ideas, think on one's feet, and connect with one's audience — skills that are critical in disseminating ideas through writing as well.

Teaching was central to Béteille's craft as a sociologist. He always taught the first lecture of the day, arrived at work before any of his colleagues, and could be seen reviewing his notes each morning, for he believed in preparing for class. He never cut back on teaching workload, continuing to teach one course every semester throughout his tenure at the department. This engagement fed into another of Béteille's daily routines — writing 250 to 500 words in longhand every day. Until he moved to a laptop in 2001, every first draft he wrote was in longhand. It allowed him time to think and correct as he wrote, before he would key it in on his trusted typewriter. He showed through praxis that his research and publishing output were higher than that of people who worked either as full-time writers or were affiliated with institutions with no teaching duties.

All of this resulted in a rich and enlightened scholarship that spanned many aspects of Indian society. His first book *Caste, Class and Power* brought to the analysis of caste, the dynamics of class, moving beyond kinship and ritual to broader concerns. Béteille broke away from viewing caste as the sole framework, instead highlighting new alignments shaped by economic and political forces. He drew on Max Weber's ideas in this work, and included Weber in the sociology syllabus.

Going ahead, he published collections of essays in single volumes. His books covered agrarian social structure, peasant studies, inequality and also provisions for its removal. Lest it seem that Béteille was only looking within, he also wrote books that were more global in their outlook, of which *Society and Politics in India* (1991) is an example. He also wrote on the craft of sociology, its methods of analysis, and on public institutions. As someone who has lived my life in the university, his book *Universities at the Crossroads* (2010) is a masterpiece to be read and re-read.

Even after his retirement, Béteille continued his association with universities and institutions, serving as chairman of ICSSR and as chancellor of NEHU. Being appointed National Professor of Sociology (2007) was clearly an honour that Béteille would have ranked at par with being elected a Fellow of the British Academy (1992). He continued writing, with his memoirs appearing in September 2012, the year he turned 78.

Retirement gave Béteille time for quieter pursuits. Eschewing Delhi city parties, he preferred one-on-one meetings. The setting for our meetings moved from his room at the Delhi School of Economics to his home. New rituals like watching him make filter coffee with meticulous care before we sat down for a chat became important. I also became one of his regular walking partners. In Lodhi Gardens, we would often find a bench to observe people while discussing everything from ideas to food to sport. His casual remarks often carried deep insight, prompting me to note them down later. Over time, our walks moved to local parks, but the ritual of going to Sagar in Defence Colony to share an *idli* and a *vada* over a cup of coffee — a nod to his fieldwork days in Tamil Nadu — continued. The rule on all eating out remained unchanged from my PhD days — we alternated paying or split the bill. Correctness and decency were codes the professor never stirred from.

Thank you, Professor Béteille, for your steadfast presence in my life and for all that I learnt from you. You will be deeply missed.

(The writer is Professor of Sociology, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, New Delhi)

The melting Himalayas and India's looming water crisis

B K SINGH

The glaciers of the Himalayas are retreating under the pressure of global warming. Seasonal snow, too, has been declining year after year, reducing river flows and threatening water security across the subcontinent. This trend endangers irrigation across nearly 6 lakh sq km of agricultural land and jeopardises the generation of around 26,000 MW of hydropower. The livelihoods of over a billion people are at stake.

According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development, snowfall between November 2024 and March 2025 declined by 23.6% compared to the long-term average since 2003. The catchments of the Ganga, Indus and Brahmaputra river systems—covering about 42,000 sq km of glacier area and nearly 16 lakh sq km of seasonal snow—are under increasing stress, directly affecting flows in rivers and tributaries.

After a prolonged dry spell from November 2025 until the third week of January 2026, delayed snowfall finally arrived in the Himalayas. This coincided with severe snowstorms across North America, Europe, Russia and Japan.

In the United States alone, these storms claimed over 100 lives, triggered power outages, and grounded more than 14,000 flights.

To understand this late spurt of snowfall, it is necessary to examine the role of the Arctic polar vortex and the broader causes behind declining Himalayan snow. When the polar vortex is stable, the jet stream remains relatively orderly, confining cold air to the Arctic. When disrupted, the jet stream becomes more distorted and wavy, allowing warm air to surge northwards into the Arctic while frigid air plunges south into lower latitude regions of the globe.

While scientists have not conclusively linked climate change to polar vortex disruptions, there is clear evidence of the Arctic region warming faster than the rest of the planet—a phenomenon known as Arctic amplification. Retreating sea ice exposes earth surfaces that absorb more sunlight, accelerating warming and altering atmospheric circulation patterns over the polar region. The growing race for oil and rare earth minerals in the Arctic risks further destabilising this fragile system. Such activities in the Arctic region must be halted.

Like the Arctic, the Himalayas are warming nearly twice as fast. Global warming and weakening western disturbances are the primary reasons for declining winter snowfall. Four of the last five winters have recorded below-average snowfall, indicating a clear trend rather than a one-off anomaly. Reduced snow cover increases the risk of droughts, forest fires and glacial lake outburst floods.

The absence of rain and snow has dried forest floors across Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir, triggering extensive forest fires even during the cold and dry winter. Inflammable grasses and weeds have fuelled blazes across thousands of hectares, damaging young tree regeneration and severely affecting wildlife, particularly amphibians and reptiles.

Low precipitation has also distressed farming communities. Staple crops like barley and oats have failed in several regions. In Ladakh, where agriculture depends on glacier meltwater, farmers struggled through a harsh winter drought.

Though there were attempts to create a few artificial reservoirs with ice, it was not on the scale that it could benefit every farmer of the union territory. Though glaciers melt in summer, streams remained dry through spring. This explains how winter precipitation is important even for the communities residing closer to the glaciers.

The apple-growing farmers, too, are hit. Apple trees right from flowering need between 1,200 and 1,600 chilling hours. Delayed snowfall has disrupted this cycle. Traditional varieties such as Royal Delicious and Red Delicious have disappeared from lower altitude areas of Mandi, Shimla and Kullu, while warmer conditions have encouraged scab and canker diseases. There is enough evidence that farmers are abandoning the apple orchards, uprooting the trees and growing vegetables in the area. To find a congenial atmosphere, the apple orchards are being relocated to higher altitudes, which involves a considerable financial burden on the farmer.

Tourists who go for enjoying snowfall and skiing have largely remained disappointed till the last week of January, impacting the livelihood of the locals who facilitated their stay, food and movement. As the tourism picks up, there are traffic jams and crowding in hotels and restaurants, causing pollution to the already depleted flow of water in the streams. Tourist numbers must be restricted in the region, a carrying capacity must be worked out and tourism must be regulated accordingly.

Some strategies to cope with declining precipitation would be to revive traditional water harvesting, promote climate-resilient agriculture and adopt nature-based solutions. Ground-level water security should also be enhanced. The average rise in global temperature must be restricted by transitioning away from fossil fuel consumption. The fundamental response of emission mitigation has remained weak globally. But there can't be a pause to policy, which must also prioritise scientific, well-funded cryosphere monitoring and ensure coordination and data sharing across boundaries to shape a future-ready strategy.

(The writer is a former head of Forest Force, Karnataka)

Iran is skilled at prolonging negotiations over its nuclear programme, and seems to be hoping President Trump is out for a quick win rather than a prolonged regional war

Steve Witkoff, President Trump's special envoy (centre), and Jared Kushner, the president's son-in-law, with Oman's foreign minister, Badr Albusaidi. Talks on Iran's nuclear programme between the US and Iran in Oman are expected to continue on what the foreign minister of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, called a "framework" for "future talks". AFP

Trump reverts to diplomacy with Iran, but the road is narrow

STEVEN ERLANGER

Even with President Donald Trump's "beautiful armada" off its shores, Iran has once again resorted to a familiar strategy: kicking the radioactive can of its nuclear programme down the road of extended negotiations.

But given the fundamental disagreements between the two sides, the rapid buildup of US forces in the region and Israeli anxiety over Iran's ballistic missiles, the road may be shorter than Iran seems to believe.

Talks on Iran's nuclear programme between the United States and Iran on Friday in Oman were successful, in the sense that they did not end in either acrimony or airstrikes. Talks are expected to continue soon on what the foreign minister of Iran, Abbas Araghchi, called "a framework" for — "future talks."

"It was a good start," he told Iranian media. "We agreed to continue talks, but we'll consult in capitals how to continue. If this trend persists, we can reach a solid framework for future talks in the next sessions."

On Saturday in a post on Telegram, Araghchi repeated Iran's position — that it insists on the right to enrich and that ballistic missiles are not negotiable.

Though there were no direct US-Iranian talks, there was "an opportunity to shake hands with the American delegation," the post said, adding that his remarks were made in an interview with *Al Jazeera*.

Trump, too, told reporters Friday evening that the talks were off to a "good start," and that he was in "no rush" to make a deal. Iran, he said, would have to agree to "no nuclear weapons."

But the president's remarks created confusion. Iran has already said it would never build a nuclear weapon — an assertion that Western governments dismiss. And Trump's own negotiators have said that the American bottom line is that Iran agree to no nuclear enrichment at all.

The American demands, as originally formulated, are that Iran hand over all of its enriched uranium, especially the roughly 440 kilograms (about 970 pounds) at near bomb-grade, enough for 10 weapons; limit the range of its ballistic missiles so they cannot reach Israel; and end support for its regional proxy militias, like Hamas, Hezbollah and the Houthis.

Israel itself has been concerned about Iran's rapid repair of its ballistic missile production facilities, which would be an early target in any war.

Trump, who in the past has favoured quick, limited military action, seems to prefer an agreement that he can proclaim as a victory without getting bogged down into a long, regional war of the kind that Iran threatens if it is attacked. Such a war could cause the deaths of hundreds of Americans, hit Israel hard, disrupt the world's energy markets and most likely inflame his Make America Great Again movement, which has been fiercely critical of long US wars in the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Iran and the talented Araghchi have had long practice at negotiating, frustrating generations of Westerners. Even now, at its weakest point, after the June war with Israel and the United States and the crushing of enormous popular protests, Iran has advantages. The regime, feeling so threatened, is less likely to restrain its counterattacks, one reason America's allies in the Gulf, like Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Oman, are urging a diplomatic solution.

"What's really interesting is that Iran continues to insist on a negotiation framework as if nothing has changed or there is no internal threat from the protests or from Trump's armada and threats," said Sanam Vakil, director of the Middle East and North Africa programme at Chatham House. "The negotiation terms and conditions are exactly what they were last fall and before the 12-day war in June."

The question, she said, is whether Trump has the patience for a negotiated deal. Tehran, she said, is clearly testing that.

As in Venezuela, the military buildup near Iran is designed to increase pressure on the country to make concessions, but US American forces also need more time to prepare to deal with a regional war should one start.

That gives time for talking. But how long remains unclear. Trump's initial rhetoric in support of the Iranians who protested the regime and died by the thousands has put his own credibility on the line, analysts say, making the chance of military action considerably higher than in the past.

But there are also doubts about what a military intervention would accomplish. Even if the Americans decapitate the Islamic Republic, killing the supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and many of the top generals of the Revolutionary Guard, the chances of a democratic government emerging are thin. Analysts suggest that it more likely would be a more hard-line military government under the Islamic flag that could decide to race for a nuclear weapon as the best deterrent against future attacks.

Despite the huge protests, the fierce and bloody reaction from the regime showed that it had no visible splits. And there is "a strong view on the Iranian side that Trump has an excessive and exaggerated view of Iranian weakness," said Trita Parsi, an Iran scholar with the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft in Washington.

If diplomacy is to work, "these Iranians believe a short, intense war may be necessary to correct Trump's perception and compel him to adopt more realistic demands," Parsi said. Even if Iran takes large losses in such a war, so will the Americans and Israelis, and "Trump has less tolerance for losses or a protracted war," he said.

Trump's original bottom line, which may still be the real one—zero enrichment, limits on ballistic missiles and no support for proxies—would be "tantamount to complete capitulation, even though Iran has not been defeated militarily," Parsi said. Those demands will lead, sooner or later, to a collapse in the talks, analysts agree.

But a quick deal on nuclear enrichment alone could also be politically problematic for Trump, given his dismissal of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran as "the worst deal in history." In these talks, Iran is refusing to stop enrichment entirely, but is reportedly willing to limit its nuclear enrichment to 3% — far short of the near weapons-grade 60% it has been doing since Trump pulled out of the 2015 deal in 2018.

But that deal limited Iran's enrichment to 3.67%, so to return to a 2015-like arrangement would hardly be considered a victory. The 2015 deal did have "sunset clauses" and time limits that Trump also criticised. A new deal that was indefinite could, arguably, be labelled a better one, even if it lifts many economic sanctions and leaves the Islamic Republic largely in place.

For now, both sides appear to be buying time — Iran to preserve its nuclear leverage and strategic depth, and the United States to test whether pressure short of war can still yield concessions. That ambiguity may be sustainable only briefly. The longer the talks drag on without narrowing the gap on enrichment, missiles and regional power, the greater the risk that diplomacy itself becomes a trigger rather than a brake on conflict.

History suggests that Iran's leaders are adept at surviving moments like this, when military threats loom but decisive action remains uncertain. The question is whether Trump, who has built his political identity on unpredictability and strength, is willing to accept a deal that looks incremental rather than transformative.

If neither side adjusts its expectations, negotiations may serve less as a path to agreement than as a final proving ground — testing not just red lines and resolve, but how much instability the region, and the world, can absorb before words give way to force.

The New York Times

Kannada-medium schools at the margins

SHAROON SUNNY

The debate on Kannada-medium schools in border areas resurfaces with predictable regularity, often stated in the language of cultural loss, identity, and linguistic pride. The reiteration is a familiar and important one: education in the mother tongue is foundational. For the mother tongue to be accessible and available in school education, sustained efforts are needed to preserve and promote Kannada, especially in regions where Kannada-speaking communities live at the margins of state boundaries. Few would disagree with this in principle. Yet if the discussion stops at rhetoric alone, it risks becoming an empty gesture—one that romanticises language while ignoring the lived realities of schooling.

There is strong pedagogic and cognitive consensus that children learn best in their first language, particularly in the early years. Mother-tongue education enables conceptual clarity, emotional security, and a sense of belonging. In border regions, whether in Maharashtra, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, or Kerala, Kannada-medium schools also function as cultural anchors, maintaining linguistic continuity across generations. Historically, these concerns echo earlier language movements in Karnataka, most notably the Gokak agitation of the 1980s, as well as post-Independence debates following the linguistic reorganisation of states. At their core, these movements sought dignity for language and its speakers.

Yet history also shows us that language policy cannot survive on sentiment alone. What does it mean, in practice, to teach and learn in the mother tongue when schools function in dilapidated buildings with poor infrastructure, limited teaching materials, and chronic teacher shortages? In many Kannada-medium schools in border areas, classrooms are overcrowded or under-resourced, teacher vacancies remain unfilled, and multigrade teaching is the norm rather than the exception. Unsurprisingly, enrolment declines year after year—not because families reject Kannada, but because they fear what such schooling might cost their children. This fear is compounded by the perception of limited career opportunities. Parents, making pragmatic decisions under economic pressure, increasingly choose English-medium schools or schools in the regional majority language of the host state. English, in particular, is viewed as a gateway to higher education, employment, and mobility. When Kannada-medium schools are unable to offer comparable academic support or visible pathways beyond schooling, linguistic loyalty alone cannot hold families back. To frame such choices as cultural betrayal is to misunderstand the material conditions shaping them.

Teachers, however, often experience this shift not merely as a demographic change but as a moral and intellectual loss. In interviews conducted with schoolteachers, many of them deeply invested in language education—there is a recurring sense that language preservation is an act of responsibility, even guardianship. "The younger lot want this," one senior teacher observed. "They don't want to learn their mother tongues. They want to learn English." What we will lose, she said, is something precious that we have guarded over time. She used the Kannada word *jopaana*—to protect, to keep safe—to describe that loss, a word whose meaning neither English nor AI can fully capture.

For these teachers, the concern is cognition. "If we don't have enough young people who can think originally and critically," she added, "we'll end up with synthetic intelligence that will eventually do all the thinking for us." The warning is striking, especially in an era where AI-generated language is increasingly fluent but often unmoored from lived cultural meaning. Mother-tongue education, in this view, is not simply about preservation of the past; it is about sustaining the conditions for original thought, ethical judgment, and intellectual depth.

At the same time, teachers in border areas face their own structural challenges. Recruitment exams and eligibility tests are often conducted only in the host state's dominant language, placing Kannada-medium teachers at a disadvantage and worsening shortages. Asking teachers to protect a language without addressing these systemic barriers amounts to placing cultural responsibility on individuals while withholding institutional support.

The constitutional framework is clear: linguistic minorities have the right to conserve their language and to receive education in the mother tongue. But constitutional ideals must be translated into sustained funding, improved infrastructure, teacher support, and serious interstate cooperation. If Kannada-medium schools in border regions are to survive, they must be sites of educational confidence rather than quiet attrition. The question is not whether Kannada deserves preservation—it unquestionably does—but whether we are willing to do the harder work that preservation demands.

(The writer is an assistant professor at Azim Premji University)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 1976

Rajkumar, Sethna honoured

Mysore, Feb. 8.
At its most colourful 56th convocation, the Mysore University today honoured itself by honouring India's top scientist, Dr. H. N. Sethna, distinguished economist Dr. M. H. Gopal, reputed litterateur, Mr. V. Seetharamaiah and Kannada matinee idol Rajkumar. The large gathering at the open air theatre in the Manasagangotri campus cheered as acting Vice-Chancellor D. V. Urs, introducing each of them, listed their contributions. Dr. Sethna said he cherished the honorary doctorate of the university founded by Sir M. Visvesvaraya.

25 YEARS AGO: FEBRUARY 2001

State Govt lifts ban on direct recruitment

Bangalore, Feb 8
The State Cabinet today decided to lift the ban on direct recruitment of staff in government services, which it had imposed following the controversy on rural weightage. All new recruitments will follow the 25 per cent horizontal rural weightage in recruitments. Briefing reporters, Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister D B Chandre Gowda said that the ban which was imposed till a decision was taken on giving weightage to rural youth in employment, has now been cleared.

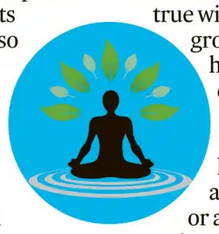
OASIS | NAZEER AHMED KAZI

When machines learn, must wisdom lead?

Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising modern life. AI is rapidly transforming society, presenting both immense opportunities and significant challenges for humanity. With AI's advancements come critical questions about ethics, purpose, and the very essence of being human – questions long contemplated in religious and spiritual texts. Hindu scriptures emphasise the responsible use of knowledge. The *Bhagavad Gita* (4-38), "In this world, there is nothing so sublime and pure as transcendental knowledge."

But Krishna also warns that knowledge without dharma (righteousness) can lead to destruction. The *Mahabharata* portrays how unchecked ambition and misuse of power—even knowledge—can result in great suffering.

The Quran encourages the pursuit of knowledge but warns of its misuse. The Quran 17-36 also cautions: "Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart – all those will be questioned.



Artificial intelligence can serve humanity. AI systems are designed to augment human capabilities and not replace human agency. The Bible emphasises the unique value of humanity, created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) and endowed with wisdom and moral responsibility. Scripture reminds us that knowledge alone is not wisdom; true wisdom comes from God. As AI grows in capability, it must serve humanity's God-given purposes – justice and compassion – not replace them.

AI can serve humanity – helping doctors save lives, aiding students in learning, or assisting farmers with smart technology. But it must not override human compassion, judgement and responsibility. Job automation, surveillance, and bias in AI systems raise urgent moral concerns. Humans remain stewards, not slaves, to the technology they create. In conclusion, while AI reflects humanity's incredible intellectual progress, religious texts remind us that knowledge without ethics is incomplete.

If we align AI development with spiritual principles – truth, justice, humanity – we can ensure it uplifts rather than endangers us. Therefore, it will serve humanity well if it bears in mind that technology is to serve, not to manipulate, humans and their society. All ethical quality of AI depends on the human designers; therefore, it is an AI bioethics and, at the same time, a trans-bioethics that bridges the human and material world.

Gogoi's Pak trip breached visa rules: Sarma

Assam CM cites SIT report; Cong leader denies charges

SUMIR KARMAKAR
GUWAHATI, DHNS

Himanta Biswa Sarma

Gaurav Gogoi

2013 PAK VISIT

- SIT says Gogoi was cleared for Lahore only, later permitted to visit Islamabad & Karachi
- Says Gogoi's wife Elizabeth received salary from Pak even after transfer to India NGO
- Report cites possible FCRA violation
- Assam govt to refer case to MHA for central probe

In what could charge up politics ahead of the Assembly elections in March-April, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said that a Special Investigation Team (SIT) probe revealed Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi was issued a visa by Pakistan during his 2013 visit, deviating from the 2012 India-Pakistan visa regime.

Gogoi denied the charges.

Releasing the long-awaited SIT report, Sarma said the visa regime allowed only city-specific visas. "Gogoi was initially granted a visa to visit only Lahore. But on December 16, 2013, while he was in Pakistan, the Ministry of Interior granted special permission to visit Islamabad and Karachi. Further investigation is warranted to determine how this clearance was obtained from the Pakistan government in such a short duration," the report said.

Sarma said the SIT report also revealed that Gogoi's British wife Elizabeth Colburn continued to receive a salary from Pakistan even after being transferred to the India chapter of an NGO in 2012. Sarma said this amounted to a violation of Section 3(1)(g) of the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).

He said the probe found Elizabeth had sent a 50-page "confidential report" to Ali Tauqueer Sheikh, a Pakistani national who headed the NGO Lead Pakistan. According to Sarma and the SIT, Sheikh had maintained an anti-India stand.

The SIT was formed in February 2025 after Sarma alleged that Gogoi and Elizabeth had links with Pakistani agencies, including the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

The SIT said that five months after his Pakistan visit, Gogoi was elected to the Lok Sabha for the first time from Kaliabor in Assam. Gogoi raised questions in Parliament on India's military preparedness, espionage activities at the Pakistan High Commission and the Kashmir conflict — an area closely linked to his wife's work. "Further investigation is warranted to determine the intention behind asking these questions, given Elizabeth Colburn's extensive networks in Pakistan," said the SIT report.

Sarma said he suspected that Gogoi may have undergone "some kind of training" during his Pakistan visit. "Let him answer what he did and whom he met during those 10 days. He is now a national security threat," he alleged.

When asked why Gogoi had not been arrested, Sarma said he would be accused of doing politics ahead of the elections. The Assam government has decided to refer the matter to the Ministry of Home Affairs for a thorough investigation by a central agency, he said.

'Super flop show'

Gogoi, the face of the Congress-led Opposition alliance, dismissed Sarma's allegations as a "super flop show". "He could not even convince the journalists in the room about these charges. He is doing all this because we are exposing his corruption and how his family grabbed 4,000 acres across Assam," Gogoi said.

India, Canada move past Nijjar row, agree on shared security plan

Modi-Carney meet to cement national security cooperation

NEW DELHI, DHNS

With Prime Minister Narendra Modi likely to host his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney in New Delhi next month, both nations have agreed on a shared work plan to guide bilateral cooperation on national security, moving past the acrimony over the killing of a Khalistani Sikh extremist in Canada.

The two sides also agreed to post security and law enforcement liaison officers in each other's national capitals.

The National Security Advisors of the two prime ministers, Ajit Doval and Nathalie Drouin, recently met in Ottawa. Both sides acknowledged progress on initiatives aimed at supporting the safety and security of their countries and citizens. They agreed on a shared work plan to guide bilateral cooperation on national security and law enforcement issues, enabling practical collaboration on respective priorities, according to a readout issued by the government in New Delhi.

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney and PM Narendra Modi. REUTERS FILE

Doval and Drouin agreed that each country would establish security and law-enforcement liaison officers and that their respective agencies would build on working relationships. This step will help streamline bilateral communications and enable timely information sharing on issues of mutual concern, such as the illegal flow of drugs, particularly fentanyl precursors, and transnational organised criminal networks, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Sunday.

They also committed to formalising cooperation on cybersecurity policy and information sharing on cybersecurity issues, as well as continuing discussions on cooperation related to fraud and immigration enforcement.

Relations between New Delhi and Ottawa hit a low on September 18, 2023, when then Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused India of involvement in the killing of Khalistani extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Modi is likely to host Carney in the first week of March. The two leaders are expected to sign agreements on the supply of uranium from Canada to India, in addition to other pacts on energy, minerals and Artificial Intelligence.

'Call to genocide': Cong hits out at BJP over Sarma's point-blank video

NEW DELHI & GUWAHATI, DHNS: Opposition on Sunday hit out at the ruling BJP over a video posted on 'X' by its Assam unit, saying it was "nothing but a call to genocide" and demanded strict action, as it was a hate campaign against Muslims.

The Assam BJP unit removed the post from its handle after a furore erupted over a video that purportedly showed Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma aiming a rifle and symbolically firing at two people depicted as belonging to the minority community, with the caption "point-blank shot."

The video, which garnered more than five lakh views on X within hours, sparked a row with the Opposition Congress reacting sharply, who accused the ruling BJP of promoting hatred against Muslims ahead of Assembly elections in Assam, in March-April.

On its official 'X' handle, the Congress said the video is "deeply abhorrent and disturbing" and cannot be dismissed as random troll content.

"This amounts to a call to mass violence and genocide. It is a reflection of the true face of this fascist regime, which has harboured this hatred for decades and, in the last 11 years, tried to normalise it," it said.

Congress general secretary KC Venugopal urged the judiciary to take action as there is "no hope" that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will condemn or act against it.

Several lawyers and activists also condemned the video, calling it another attempt by the BJP to push polarisation politics ahead of the elections.

This came amid frequent statements by Sarma targeting "miyas," a term used to refer to Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam.

Infiltration, conversions skew population: Bhagwat

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat speaks at an event marking the organisation's centenary year in Mumbai on Sunday. PTI

MOHAN BHAGWAT
RSS chief

"Caste now exists largely for selfish interests and political purposes, as the traditional occupational basis of caste had long disappeared.

RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat on Sunday identified religious conversion, infiltration, and a low birth rate as the three main factors behind population imbalance, saying scientific research suggests "we should have three children in a family," which, however, is a matter of choice.

He condemned the use of force, inducement or deception to convert people and increase the number of a sect, noting that "ghar wapasi" was the answer for those wishing to return to their original faith.

'Ready to step down'

Bhagwat said he believes that after turning 75, one should step aside from formal posts and remain in a guiding role.

"Generally, it is said that after turning 75, one should work without holding any post. I have completed 75 years and informed the RSS, but the organisation asked me to continue. Whenever the RSS asks me to step down, I will do so," he said at an event in Mumbai to mark the centenary celebrations of the RSS.

In 2025, both Bhagwat and Prime Minister Narendra Modi turned 75.

Bhagwat, however, added that retirement from work will never happen. "The Sangh extracts work till the last drop of blood from its volunteers. And in its history, there has never been a situation where someone had to be retired."

Responding to a question on who can become the RSS sarsanghchalak, Bhagwat said the organisation's head would always be a Hindu, but the top post is not restricted to any caste, stressing that anyone — including members of Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) — could hold the position if they are the "best available candidate".

Uniform Civil Code

On the Uniform Civil Code, Bhagwat said the law should be framed by taking everyone into confidence and must not create divisions in society. "In Uttarakhand, three lakh suggestions were received and, after consulting all stakeholders, the Act was passed," he said.

Rejecting the "majority-minority" debate and politics, he said Indians are "one people", while calling for dialogue with Muslim and Christian communities. "Islam is called the religion of peace, but peace is not seen. If there is no spirituality in religion, it becomes dominating and aggressive. What is seen in Islam and Christianity today is not in line with the teachings of Jesus Christ and Prophet Muhammad."

He appreciated Bangladesh Hindus for putting up a united front amid turmoil. "There are still 1.25 crore Hindus in Bangladesh. If they remain united, they can use the political system for their benefit and security. But unity is essential. Fortunately, they have decided not to run away and have chosen to fight," he said.

(With PTI inputs)

Oppn looks to raise US trade deal, silencing of Rahul in Parl

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

SESSION STRATEGY

- Oppn to raise trade pact and US order on Russian oil in Parliament
- Protests over not allowing Rahul to speak in LS likely to continue
- First phase of session to end on Friday, to reconvene on March 9
- Last week LS functioned for just 7 hours and 41 minutes

Parliament is headed into a tumultuous week, with the Opposition all set to raise the decibel levels on the Indo-US trade deal, putting question marks on the smooth conduct of general discussion on the Union Budget from Monday.

The Opposition would be adding the deal as well as the US order on Russian oil to its list of issues, which also include Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, not being allowed to raise the remarks of retired Army Chief Gen M M Naravane on the government's handling of the China issue.

Opposition leaders are meeting at the Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge's office on Monday at 10 am to discuss the next step for the session.

The first phase of the Budget session is scheduled to end on Friday, with Parliament reconvening on March 9. The overall session will end on April 2.

The discussion on the Budget was to start in the Lok Sabha last Thursday, but the Opposition's protests did not allow that. When asked whether they would allow normal functioning this week, a senior Opposition leader simply said, "We will know tomorrow (Monday)."

Last week saw the Opposition's protests, led by the Congress, causing an unprecedented situation where Prime Minister Narendra Modi apparently could not reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address over Rahul not being allowed to talk about China.

The Lok Sabha functioned for just 7 hours and 41 minutes during the Budget Session: Around 25 hours were lost to disruption. While 18 hours were earmarked for the debate on the Motion of Thanks, the House took up the issue only for 2 hours and 48 minutes.

However, the Rajya Sabha sat for around 31 hours since January 28, and 17 hours and 53 minutes out of this were spent on discussing the Motion of Thanks. Modi replied to the debate in the Rajya Sabha.

The Opposition is unlikely to dial down its protests, as eight of its MPs have been suspended for the entire session following their protest over Rahul not being allowed to speak.

India needs to get rid of destructive communist ideology: Amit Shah

RAIPUR, PTI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday said the country needs to get rid of the "destructive" communist ideology at the earliest and appealed to Naxalites to lay down their arms, assuring them a red carpet from the government.

Addressing a conclave, titled 'Chhattsiagrh@25-Shifting The Lens' in Nava Raipur, Shah said the Maoist problem cannot be linked to the lack of development or considered merely as a law-and-order issue.

"Left-Wing Extremism is an ideology-driven challenge," he added.

Amit Shah

Shah said the people of India should understand the truth of this ideology.

"Wherever communists remained in power, they could not bring development. Communist ideology is an ideology indicative of destruction, and the country is required to get rid of it immediately," he added.

Shah said the communist ideology is no longer present in democratic politics.

"It does not exist in Tripura and Bengal. In Kerala, it is surviving to an extent; however, people have started the change from Thiruvananthapuram," he added.

Shah appealed to Maoists to lay down their arms, saying the government doesn't want to fire a single bullet and will welcome those who surrender "with a red carpet".

Shameful surrender: CPM slams Centre

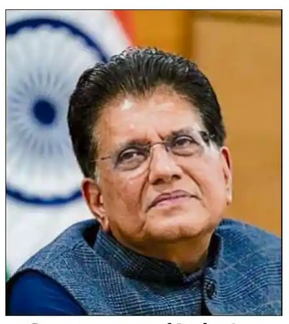
NEW DELHI, DHNS: CPM on Sunday described the Indo-US trade deal as an "attack on national sovereignty", and the "sweeping" concessions given to the United States pose "serious threats" to the economy and agriculture.

The CPM said the US is dictating policies, including decisions on the purchase of oil from Russia. This is a "shameful surrender" by the BJP-led government, it said.

In a statement, the party's Polit Bureau demanded that the complete details of the deal be placed immediately before Parliament. The government must be compelled to desist from signing any agreement that is harmful to the interests of workers and farmers, it said.

India can easily buy US goods worth $500bn: Goyal

NEW DELHI, PTI



Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal

MINISTER SPEAKS

- US goods worth $500bn over the next 5 years extremely conservative number
- India imports goods worth $40-50bn from US every year
- Already have $50 billion worth of orders for Boeing for aircraft

India will have no difficulty in purchasing goods worth $500 billion from the US over the next five years, as envisaged under the bilateral trade pact, and in fact, this is an "extremely" conservative number for a country that aspires to become a $30 trillion economy, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said on Sunday.

"My sense is we need at least a $100 billion plus only for the aviation sector, in addition to oil, LNG, LPG, and crude oil," Goyal said.

According to a joint statement issued by both sides on Saturday on the framework for the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement, India has expressed its intention to purchase USD 500 billion of US energy products, aircraft and aircraft parts, precious metals, technology products and coking coal over the next five years.

Goyal said Indian goods facing 18% tariffs will still have a competitive advantage in US markets compared to products from China and other competitor countries, which face higher levies. China has been slapped with 35% tariffs, and other countries in Asia face 19% and up.

At present, he said, India could source imports worth about USD 300 billion from the US that it currently buys from other countries.

"We are even today importing 300 billion dollars of goods that can be imported from the US. We are importing from all over the world. That is going to grow up to two trillion in the next five years...I told my counterparts that look, I can assure you that there is demand in India, but you have to be competitive," he said.

Goyal said that as the country's economy is growing at a faster pace, demand for a variety of goods ranging from semiconductor chips, high-end machinery and data centre equipment to aircraft, aircraft parts and energy goods is also increasing. He said at present, India is importing goods worth about USD 40-50 billion from the US every year.

Citing examples where purchases from the US can be enhanced, he said big tech firms have announced large investments in India and, therefore, "my sense is that we will see 10 gigawatts of data centres" in the country, and for that India will need equipment, which the US can supply.

RSS affiliate opposes GM products mentioned in trade deal

NEW DELHI, DHNS: The Bharatiya Kisan Sangh (BKS), the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS) affiliate that works in the field of agriculture and farming, has demanded that genetically modified (GM) products used in animal feed should not be allowed to enter Indian markets "under any name or condition".

Seeking clarification from the Centre on the "sensitive products" that the Modi regime has claimed would be protected under the India-US trade deal, the BKS said the impact of GM crops on humans and animals in India was under investigation, and that the signs weren't very promising.

"The BKS is of firm belief that US GM products used in animal feed should not be allowed in the country under any circumstances, under any name or condition," said BKS general secretary Mohini Mohan Mishra.

"GM crops are still not allowed in the country. If one has to protect the people's health and India's biodiversity, GM crops have to be kept out," he demanded.

India and the US on Saturday released a joint statement on the framework of an "interim arrangement" on Saturday.

Noting Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal's clarification on keeping "food grains and dairy products" out of the trade deal's purview, the BKS said it would come out with a detailed reaction on the pact once there was "complete clarity" from the government on it.

The Swadeshi Jagran Manch, another Sangh affiliate, which works to promote and protect domestic goods, is also gathering more information and is expected to release a considered reaction this week.

The RSS has consistently opposed — through its affiliates — the introduction of GM crops in India. Last year, they strongly opposed the permission given to the Punjab Agriculture University to test GM maize.

POLITICAL HARVEST

Farmers' outfit plans to contest Kerala polls

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

A decision by the Kerala Independent Farmers Association (KIFA) — a forum of farmers in the state's high ranges — to contest the Assembly polls could become a cause for concern for the Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF), which has been aiming at cashing in on farmers' resentment over man-animal conflicts.

Of the 140 Assembly constituencies, around 75 are affected by man-animal conflict. The problem has assumed serious proportions in around 30 of them.

Apart from causing extensive damage to crops, man-animal conflicts have also led to the loss of lives of many farmers and tribal-community members.

The UDF has been trying to cash in on the issue, with Congress Legislative Party leader V D Satheesan even carrying out a "Malayora Samara Yatra" (high-range stir) last year following a series of mass protests over man-animal conflicts.

What is more troubling for the Congress is reports that KIFA Chairman Alex Ozhukayil may contest from Peravoor in Kannur, which is state party chief Sunny Joseph's constituency.

As part of mounting pressure on mainstream political parties, the KIFA announced its move to contest in 30 seats unless political parties took up its demands. Its key demands are amendment of the Wildlife (Protection) Act to allow the killing of wild animals that come out of forest limits, a proper study on the wild animal population and carrying capacity of forests, special tribunals to ensure due compensations to those attacked by wild animals, and the lifting of restrictions on types of crops in plantations close to forests.

Congress leaders are likely to hold talks with KIFA leaders. It was only after the Congress launched its stir over the issue that the Left Front government in the state was forced to act on it, said Congress sources.

The state government recently initiated amendments to the Wildlife (Protection) Act by including a provision for the killing of wild animals attacking people. It now requires the President's assent.

Kerala Muslim outfit seeks more festival holidays

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS: The Samastha Kerala Jem-iyyathul Ulama, a forum of Islamic scholars in Kerala, has demanded the bifurcation of large districts such as Malappuram and the declaration of three days of official holidays for Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha.

Resolutions in this regard were passed at the centenary celebrations of Samastha in Kasargod.

The resolution seeking the bifurcation of Malappuram — a Muslim-majority district — said that with a population of over 45 lakh and its vast geographical extent, dividing the district would help ensure better administration and equitable distribution of resources.

The resolution also suggested that other large districts such as Ernakulam (Kochi), Palakkad and Idukki could be bifurcated, considering their topography.

It said that dividing districts would make more facilities — including hospitals and administrative offices — accessible to the people.

Samastha pointed out that neighbouring Tamil Nadu has 39 parliamentary constituencies and 38 districts, whereas Kerala has only 14 districts against 20 parliamentary constituencies.

Kashmiri women exit Valley as job crisis reshapes marriage choices

For many brides, relocation is about dignity rather than ambition

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

A month after her wedding in Srinagar, 28-year-old Nida (name changed) boarded a flight to Mumbai. There was no extended farewell, no formal send-off. Her husband worked in the corporate sector; she had already begun transferring her teaching credentials.

"We discussed moving even before marriage," she says. "Staying back did not make sense for either of us."

For Saima, 29, the decision came later. Married to a software engineer posted in Gurugram, she spent nearly three years in Kashmir after her wedding, trying to find work locally. "I kept thinking something would work out," says Saima, a management postgraduate. "But months passed. I didn't want to sit at home waiting."

She eventually moved, taking up a contractual role in an ed-tech firm. "It wasn't about ambition," she adds. "It was about dignity."

QUIET DEPARTURE

- Over 3.6 lakh educated youth registered unemployed in J&K; women form a major share
- Families prefer grooms settled in metros or abroad for economic security
- Education has become central to matchmaking conversations
- Kashmir's private sector remains fragile, limiting professional opportunities

Their stories point to a quiet but growing social shift in Kashmir. Increasingly, women are leaving the Valley after marriage, relocating to other Indian cities or abroad. This is not a migration triggered by conflict or sudden upheaval, but a calculated response to economic constraints and limited professional opportunity at home.

Official data placed before the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly shows that over 3.6 lakh educated youth are registered as unemployed across the Union Territory, with the Kashmir division accounting for a large share.

Women form a significant proportion of these registrations, even as their labour force participation remains uneven. Economists caution that this reflects only registered unemployment, since enrolment with the employment department is voluntary and many job seekers—especially those preparing independently, seeking private-sector work or looking outside J&K—do not register.

"These numbers are best seen as a baseline," says Prof Farzana Gulzar, who teaches management at the University of Kashmir. "The actual scale of educated unemployment is likely much higher, and that uncertainty shapes decisions on marriage and relocation."

Sociologists say the implications go beyond jobs. Dr Farrukh Faheem, a sociologist at the University of Kashmir's Institute of Kashmir Studies, argues that marriage itself is being redefined.

"Earlier, marriage marked stability—social, economic and geographic. Now it is a strategy for mobility. Families are recalibrating marriage choices in response to prolonged economic stagnation," he says.

Families increasingly prefer grooms settled in metros or abroad, where salaries are regular and career growth appears more assured.

Marriage facilitators say education has become central to matchmaking conversations. "Families whose sons work outside, especially in the corporate sector, now look for girls with professional degrees," says a Srinagar-based facilitator.

Economic realities underpin these choices. Despite rising education levels, Kashmir's private sector remains limited and fragile. Professional opportunities are scarce, career progression is slow, and sustaining dual-income households locally is difficult.

"Women today are unwilling to step into marriages that translate into economic invisibility. This is not a rejection of tradition. It is a response to structural stagnation," Gulzar says.

UIDAI finishes over 1 cr biometric updates for schoolchildren

NEW DELHI, PTI: Aadhaar custodian UIDAI has completed mandatory biometric updates for one crore school children covering 83,000 schools across the country, an official statement said.

A child under the age of five can enrol for Aadhaar by providing a photograph, name, date of birth, gender, address, and birth certificate, but the fingerprints and iris biometrics of a child below the age of five are not captured for Aadhaar enrolment, as these indicators are not mature by then.

So, providing fingerprints and iris information in Aadhaar by following the process of MBU, upon crossing the ages of 5 and 15 years, is an essential requirement.

"The UIDAI has crossed the milestone of completing over one crore Mandatory Biometric Updates (MBUs) for schoolchildren studying in 83,000 schools across the country," the statement said.

Unique Identification Authority of India has made MBU free for children in the age group of 7 to 15 years from October 1 for a one year period.

'Dalai Lama has never met Epstein': Spiritual leader's office junks reports

NEW DELHI, AFP: The office of the Dalai Lama said on Sunday that he had never met convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, after Chinese media reported the Tibetan Buddhist leader's name was mentioned in a cache of files released by the US government.

The Dalai Lama

Last month, the US Justice Department published the latest tranche of the Epstein files—more than three million documents, photos and videos related to its investigation into the disgraced financier.

An AFP search of the files found the Dalai Lama's name was mentioned more than 150 times, with no mention of him meeting or interacting with Epstein. The mere mention of someone's name in the Epstein files does not in itself imply any wrongdoing by that person.

"Some recent media reports and social media posts concerning the 'Epstein files' are attempting to link His Holiness the Dalai Lama with Jeffrey Epstein," the leader's office said in a statement posted on X.

"We can unequivocally confirm that His Holiness has never met Jeffrey Epstein or authorised any meeting or interaction with him by anyone on His Holiness's behalf," it added.

On Thursday, state-run broadcaster the China Global Television Network (CGTN) reported that 'Dalai Lama' appeared at least 169 times in the Epstein files and mentioned an email in which an unknown sender told Epstein he was considering going to an event the Dalai Lama was set to attend.

Manipur MLA Valte airlifted to Delhi as health worsens

GUWAHATI, DHNS

Senior BJP MLA belonging to the Kuki community, Vungzagin Valte, who was critically injured in an alleged attack by the Meiteis in May 2023 in Imphal, was on Sunday airlifted to New Delhi after his condition deteriorated.

Valte was first brought to Imphal airport by a helicopter and was later airlifted to New Delhi for better treatment.

Vungzagin Valte

Chief Minister Yumnam Khemchand Singh met Valte at Imphal airport before he was airlifted. Valte was attacked in Imphal on May 3, 2023, when he was returning after meeting the then CM N Biren Singh. The Meitei-Kuki conflict had started on that day.

He was earlier airlifted to Delhi with a critical injury. He was brought to Churachandpur, but his condition deteriorated further on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Kuki Zo Council, an apex body of Kuki organisations engaged in talks with the government, in a statement appealed to all Kuki government and non-government employees not to accept postings in Meitei-dominated areas.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

TRICK OR TREAT!
WHOA, COOL COSTUMES!
THANKS! I'M AN iPHONE...BUT IT COST A LOT AND I'VE BEEN ASKING FOR DONATIONS
ANY LUCK SO FAR?
NOPE... EVERYONE KEEPS PUTTING ME ON HOLD!

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

Peanuts

YOU THINK EVERYONE IS CURIOUS DON'T YOU?
WELL, I'M NOT! WHO CARES WHY YOU'RE CARVING NOTCHES INTO YOUR STUPID DOGHOUSE? I SURE DON'T!!
I COULDN'T CARE LESS!
PLEASE TELL ME!

Marvin

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

TIYED

SRHHA

NEICSC

AARRTT

I can hook your trailer up to my truck and take it while you wait for a tow.
I appreciate that.
GRWN FUD
7/31
AFTER HIS TRUCK BROKE DOWN, HIS TRAILER NEEDED TO ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Ans. here: ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) (Answers tomorrow)

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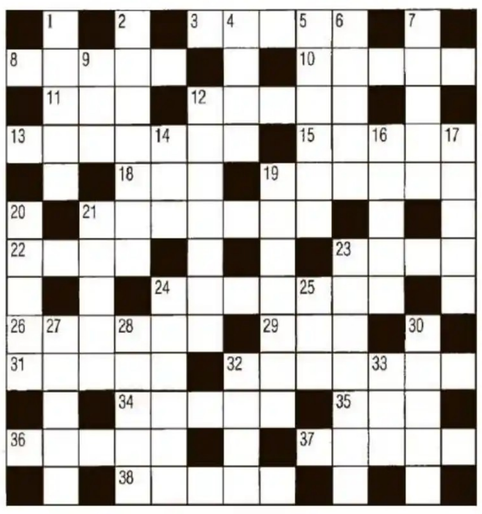
Saturday's Jumbles: OUNCE COVET WIGGLE ORNERY
Answer: The friendly hiker who didn't like to be indoors was — VERY OUTGOING

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12349



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
3 Something written with diplomacy about the ruling head (5)
8 Cat man? (5)
10 Pursuit, possibly on a horse (5)
11 A favourite trumpet piece (3)
12 Having it in person may be vital (5)
13 Points a piece of furniture out as being reasonable (7)
15 Sportingly describable as the slippery slope? (5)
18 Of Urdu derivation, it means no good (3)
19 There's spiritual advice to keep this up (6)
21 In which girls may be all bent on playing the game (7)
22 Make a bit healthier! (4)
23 Don't go to the wrong spot (4)
24 Afoot, a frightening thing to say to Jim? (3,4)
26 It's sad when tracks go round an endless line (6)
29 Terry has little means of communication (3)
31 To a saint, yes, they can affect viewers (5)
32 A note one left of negligible significance (7)
34 Jelly snake, I see (5)
35 Made a hole in the dough? Oh no! (3)
36 Moira confused an islander (5)
37 In school, Derek became so inevitably (5)
38 Playful talk? (5)

DOWN
1 Swim round the pierhead and drive off (5)
2 See intricate detail as something strongly defensible (7)
4 Unusually meaty? (4)
5 A good house converted cheap at Leatherhead (6)
6 Processed, some nicotine is medicinal (5)
7 Diminish what the seaman had to eat (5)
9 Boy in trouble, naturally (3)
12 Men of the traditional school? (3,4)
14 An objectionable word? (3)
16 Slip along and get the fish (5)
17 Burst out with pure nonsense on finishing last! (5)
19 Such synthetic stuff can show a split, note (7)
20 Fragments said to follow fission? (5)
21 Smart refusal to be put out of the race (5)
23 The way to give the firm support (7)
24 So pigs can spread it? (6)
25 Female always in the news (3)
27 Is it bound to be a salt product? (5)
28 Hotheaded pair of listeners, one learns (5)
30 Intoxicating Elgar composition (5)
32 That optically disadvantaged trio? (4)
33 Result of wet weather in Bermuda (3)

ACROSS
3 Major religion (5)
8 Discourage (5)
10 Trite (5)
11 Lettuce (3)
12 Backless sofa (5)
13 Attacking footballer (7)
15 Theme (5)
18 Slope downwards (3)
19 To rot (6)
21 Relegates (7)
22 Neckwear items (4)
23 Signals agreement (4)
24 Small stream (7)
26 Charm (6)
29 Chronic drunkard (3)
31 Water lily (5)
32 Small rounded stones (7)
34 Governs (5)
35 Afflict (3)
36 Jeans fabric (5)
37 Senior (5)
38 End of life (5)

DOWN
1 Cults (5)
2 Apart from (7)
4 Move (4)
5 Subsides (6)
6 Landed estate (5)
7 French capital (5)
9 Hill (3)
12 Down payment (7)
14 Girl's name (3)
16 Fulcrum (5)
17 Large strong box (5)
19 Studies (7)
20 Take illegally (5)
21 Player's first game (5)
23 Sport (7)
24 Begin again (6)
25 Hit in a high arc (3)
27 Roadside hotel (5)
28 Sensational (5)
30 Riotous brawl (5)
32 Nuisance (4)
33 Removable cover (3)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 2666

ACROSS: 1 Headway, 5 Pigment, 9 Revenge, 10 Realise, 11 Earth, 12 Damp squib, 13 Steadfast, 15 Crete, 16 Parry, 18 Garrulous, 21 Cafeteria, 24 Heave, 25 Frigate, 26 Lookout, 27 Congeal, 28 Titular.

DOWN: 1 Harness, 2 Adverse, 3 Win the day, 4 Yield, 5 Perimeter, 6 Glass, 7 Epicure, 8 Tremble, 14 Augur well, 15 Caught out, 16 Pacific, 17 Ruffian, 19 On a roll, 20 Shelter, 22 Trace, 23 Allot.

◆SU-DO-KU-6825◆

8			7			3		
	7			4	1			
2					9			
						5	1	
9			1	7	4			6
	1	4						
			4					1
			8	3			5	
		2			7			9

hard

SOLUTION TO 6824

7	9	1	3	8	6	4	5	2
4	6	2	5	9	1	7	8	3
8	5	3	4	7	2	9	1	6
6	1	9	7	5	4	3	2	8
3	4	5	2	6	8	1	7	9
2	8	7	9	1	3	5	6	4
9	3	8	1	2	5	6	4	7
5	2	4	6	3	7	8	9	1
1	7	6	8	4	9	2	3	5

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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							Triple Word Score	RACK 1
N1	M3	W4	R1	E1	I1	A1		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 2
A1	N1	K5	R1	S1	C3	A1		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 3
N1	L1	O1	I1	G2	G2	S1		
							Triple Word Score	RACK 4
H4	F4	A1	H4	I1	S1	G2		

PAR SCORE 240-250
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

SATURDAY'S SOLUTION

E1	N1	T1	R1	E1	A1	T1	RACK 1 =	71
R1	O1	T1	A1	T1	E1	S1	RACK 2 =	64
A1	P3	P3	O1	S1	E1		RACK 3 =	10
S1	E1	E1	D2	I1	E1	R1	RACK 4 =	60
							JUDD'S TOTAL	205

PAR SCORE 140-150

HITORI-3279

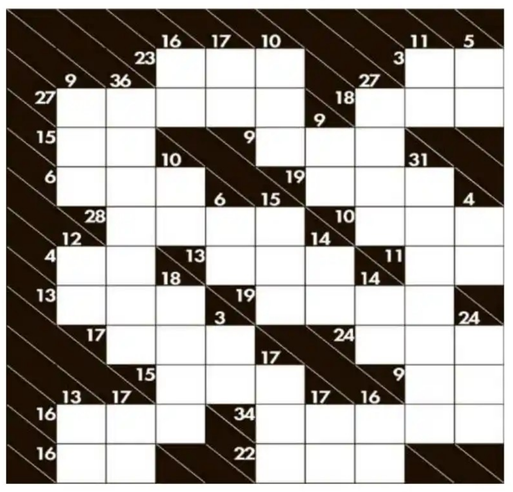
5	3	6	7	7	1	8	4
2	5	1	5	3	8	5	4
8	1	3	2	2	6	4	7
5	7	5	1	6	5	2	1
4	2	7	6	1	2	3	5
7	6	2	5	7	3	5	3
5	4	4	8	2	7	1	3
5	5	4	3	5	2	5	6

SOLUTION TO 3278

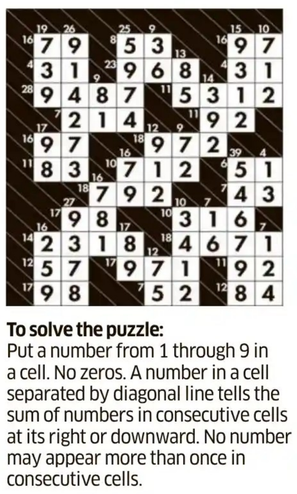
8	3	1	■	2	■	7	5
■	4	■	1	3	7	6	■
4	6	2	■	1	5	3	8
3	■	7	4	6	■	8	■
1	2	■	6	■	4	■	7
5	■	8	7	4	6	1	2
■	8	■	5	■	1	2	6
2	1	6	8	7	3	■	4

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3279



SOLUTION TO 3278



To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3822

■	7		2		3	6		■
	■			9		4	■	
		2				8		
			■	8	9		2	
			4	■		1		
		9	■		5		4	7
		■	6			■		
	■			3			8	
■	5							■

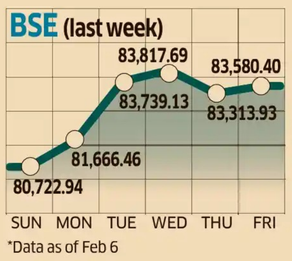
SOLUTION TO 3821

4	9	3	8	6	7	2	1	5
8	7	1	5	4	2	6	3	9
5	2	6	9	3	1	4	7	8
7	4	5	1	8	6	3	9	2
6	8	9	3	2	4	7	5	1
1	3	2	7	9	5	8	6	4
2	5	8	6	1	3	9	4	7
3	1	4	2	7	9	5	8	6
9	6	7	4	5	8	1	2	3

To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

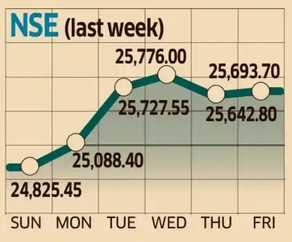
DH BUSINESS

DECCAN HERALD
Monday
February 9, 2026



*Data as of Feb 6

TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
POWERGRID	14.26%	INFY	-8.24%
ADANIPORTS	9.35%	TECHM	-7.12%
TRENT	8.80%	HCLTECH	-5.95%
INDIGO	6.84%	TCS	-5.88%
SUNPHARMA	6.25%	BEL	-4.33%



TOP GAINERS		TOP LOSERS	
POWERGRID	14.13%	INFOSYS	-8.16%
ADANI ENT	10.20%	TECH M	-7.07%
ADANI PORTS	9.22%	HCLTECH	-6.01%
TRENT	8.67%	TATA CONSULT	-5.84%
SUN PHARMA	6.26%	BEL	-4.31%

Sensex (52-week)

Feb 6, 2025	Feb 6, 2026	
78,058.16	83,580.40	7.07%

Nifty (52-week)

Feb 6, 2025	Feb 6, 2026	
23,603.35	25,693.70	8.85%

10-year Bond yield 6.73%

APPRECIATING RUPEE

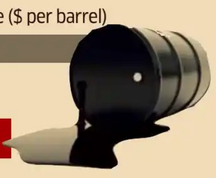
Exchange Rates*

Dollar	₹ 90.65	SGD	₹ 71.38
Pound	₹ 122.74	Yen (100 units)	₹ 57.64
Euro	₹ 106.68		

*Price at which banks sell

Crude Oil Rate ($ per barrel)

BRENT CRUDE
$68.05*
0.74%
*Rate as of Feb 6



Bengaluru fuel pump price*

(Retail)
Petrol* ₹102.92 ₹-0.07%
Diesel* ₹90.99 ₹-0.07%
*Rates as of Feb 8 #Rate change compared with yesterday

Commodity watch

COFFEE

Category	Rate (Rs per 50 kg)*
Arabica Parchment	₹ 23600 - 24300
Arabica Cherry	₹ 12100 - 13500
Robusta Parchment	₹ 16750 - 17000
Robusta Cherry	₹ 9700 - 10400

*Rates as on Feb 5

Other Commodities

Silkworm cocoon (Rs per kg)*

Bivoltine (BV)	₹ 801
Cross Breed (CB)	₹ 723

*Average rates as on Feb 6

Footwear, apparel exporters among winners in trade deal

Under the deal, US agreed to lower tariffs on Indian goods to 18% from 50%

BLOOMBERG

Footwear manufacturers and apparel exporters emerged as major winners in the joint framework for an interim trade deal between the US and India, a development that will alleviate uncertainty for financial markets.

Under the new outline unveiled this week, US President Donald Trump agreed to lower tariffs on Indian goods to an effective rate of 18% from 50%. In return, India pledged to buy $500 billion of American products and eliminate trade barriers on some US goods, including agriculture, manufactured items, chemicals and medical devices. More details of the agreement were released on Friday after an executive order signed by Trump.

"The much awaited India-US tariff deal removes the key overhang on the Indian economy, markets and currency," said Nitin Jain, chief executive officer at Kotak Mahindra Asset Management Singapore. "This puts India in the pole position in the race to China +1 opportunity in global supply chains," he said, referring to the strategy where companies diversify their manufacturing operations outside China.

The deal brought relief to Indian assets, with both equities and currency markets surging this week. The rupee enjoyed its best week in three years against the dollar, while the NSE Nifty 50 Index jumped 3.5%.

Here is how Indian industries will be impacted by the trade deal:

Labour-intensive sectors

Indian companies are some of biggest suppliers of apparel, footwear and jewellery products to the US. High tariffs on exports have skewed their supply agreements, forcing firms to opt to absorb the elevated costs and fulfill their commitments. Those will now be tariffed at 18%.

Pearl Global Industries Ltd., one of India's biggest garment exporters, expects its operations to gain significant momentum following the deal.

"With the penalty now eliminated, the discount pressure disappears — directly boosting profitability from February onwards," Managing Director Pallab Banerjee said. Pearl Global counts GAP Inc. and Ralph Lauren Corp. among its clients.

Suppliers to Walmart Inc such as Welspun Living Ltd. and Kitex Garments Ltd. might see improvement in order inflows. Gems and jewellery makers like Rajesh Exports Ltd. and Titan Company will see immediate benefit.

Shoe-making, another sector that employs millions of low-cost labourers, is anticipating relief now that both punitive and so-called reciprocal tariffs will be removed.

"For leather footwear, half of the season orders are already gone because US customers typically place winter and autumn orders in December," said Rafeeque Ahmed, chairman of Farida Group. "We hope to be able to get at least 40% of the orders from the US now," he said.

Aviation and auto

The aerospace and aviation sector enjoyed relative spotlight in the framework, with the US agreeing to remove duties on certain aircraft and aircraft parts exported by India. US companies sourced over $2 billion in aerospace components from India, according to Aequs Ltd.'s Chairman Aravind Melligeri.

"At a time when the Indian industry was mentally preparing for at least 18% tariffs, this zero rating on certain parts is more than welcome," Melligeri said. "The announcement is a positive development, potentially leading to improved cash flows and enhanced cost competitiveness for the supply chain."

Auto parts makers like Sona BLW Precision Forgings Ltd. and Samvardhana Motherson International Ltd. will gain after the US said it will give India preferential tariff rate quota on such products. India exported auto components worth $6.2 billion to the US in the year ended March 2025, according to the Automotive Component Manufacturers Association.

India's Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said that elementary auto parts exported by Indian manufacturers will face zero tariffs in the US, while some components will still be subjected to duties.

Ralph Lauren ball caps and polo shirts displayed at the Ralph Lauren flagship men's store in New York. BLOOMBERG FILE PHOTO

Further, India will cut levy on import of Harley-Davidson Inc.'s motorcycles — a key Trump demand—with more than 800 cubic centimeters of engine capacity but less than 1,600-cc to zero, a government official said. That will rev up competition for India's high-end bike producer Eicher Motors Ltd.

Meanwhile, carmakers Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. and Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Ltd. will be relieved after an official said that electric vehicles will be kept out of the trade negotiations, while duty reduction on US cars will be limited to those with engine capacity of more than 3,000-cc.

Refiners

The joint framework did not allude to India's purchases of Russian oil even though the executive order that Trump signed on Friday explicitly stated that punitive duties of 25% will return if there are purchases from Moscow. Indian refiners—Indian Oil Corp., Bharat Petroleum Corp., and Reliance Industries Ltd. — can be among the key losers. They have benefited by processing cheap Russian barrels, which boosted their profits.

Though India hasn't said it will stop buying oil from Russia, the purchasers will find themselves in the spotlight. Russian oil is still not sanctioned and India can legally buy it. Industry insiders say imports peaked in June 2025 at over 2 million barrels per day and are likely to remain below 1 million barrels, if India decides to continue lifting discounted crude.

Reliance, which has been the biggest importer of Russian oil, is also a major exporter of petroleum products to the US. It will be under greater scrutiny on the oil it processes for making and shipping fuels such as gasoline and jet fuel to the US.

As per Kpler data, exports to US comprised 16% of Reliance's overseas shipments of petroleum products in 2025. Reliance has said that it has stopped processing Russian oil at its export-oriented refinery on India's west coast.

Vintners and spirit makers

The deal will compound challenges for the alcohol beverage sector after India agreed to eliminate barriers on wine and spirits. On the back of benefits for European vintners and alcohol producers, it means even more competition for companies including Diageo Plc's Indian unit.

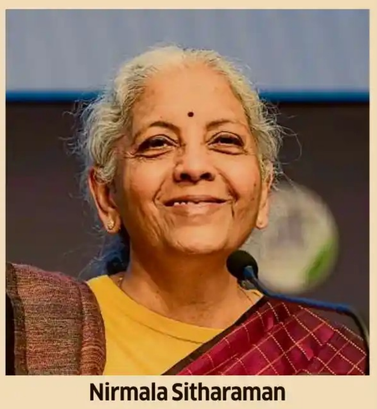
Sula Vineyards Ltd., India's largest winemaker, will also see an intensifying battle for market share with European and the US peers.

While duty concessions have been offered to US wine makers, they will be subjected to a minimum import price and relaxation on levy would be in a phased manner, an official said.

Govt to constitute high-level panel on banking soon: FM

The Budget also proposed to restructure PFC and REC

NEW DELHI, PTI



Nirmala Sitharaman

The government will soon constitute a High-Level Committee on Banking for Viksit Bharat to draw up a blueprint to create mega-lenders capable of meeting the financing needs of a developed India, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said.

"We want the committee to tell us what kind of things we need to do so that banking is made available for funding Viksit Bharat," she told PTI Videos in an interview.

Asked if it would suggest a merger of public sector banks, Sitharaman said one should not narrow it down like that.

"It is for India's banking sector to be made big enough, big enough in the sense, made or primed to take care of Viksit Bharat funding. You have to reach Viksit Bharat destination...it (Viksit Bharat) needs money, it needs financing, it needs credit, it needs banking facility to reach the common man."

When asked about the timeframe for formation of the committee, she said, "We will do it at the earliest".

"I propose setting up a 'High Level Committee on Banking for Viksit Bharat' to comprehensively review the sector and align it with India's next phase of growth, while safeguarding financial stability, inclusion and consumer protection," she had said in the Budget speech on February 1.

To achieve scale and improve efficiency in the public sector NBFCs, as a first step, the Budget also proposed to restructure the Power Finance Corporation (PFC) and Rural Electrification Corporation (REC).

"A lot of work has happened in the ministry concerned. They have come up with this expectation. Let's see how they play it out," she said, when asked if a merger is on the cards.

REC is a subsidiary of state-owned power sector lender Power Finance Corporation (PFC). Both entities play a key role in funding power generation, transmission and distribution projects.

In March 2019, PFC completed the acquisition of a majority stake in REC Ltd by transferring Rs 14,500 crore to the government.

PFC acquired 103.94 crore shares, constituting 52.63% stake, held by the government in REC, along with the management control. The acquisition price was worked out to Rs 139.50 per share. This stake acquisition came following the in-principle approval from the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs. Both PFC and REC are Navratna central public sector enterprises, and this acquisition was a step toward consolidating companies operating in the same space.

Last week, the PFC board gave in-principle approval for the merger of the non-banking finance company REC Limited with itself.

The board approval for the merger of PFC and REC came after an announcement made in this regard in the Budget on Sunday.

The finance minister noted that the Budget marks the first year of the second quarter of the 21st century, the first year of a new government term, and the beginning of a new five-year fiscal cycle.

"We are also looking ahead to 2047 and beyond, up to 2050. The focus is on building a Viksit Bharat by the centenary year of Independence and preparing India over the next 25 years for future challenges and opportunities," she said.

This long-term perspective will guide policymaking across sectors, with an emphasis on sustained growth, institutional strength and economic resilience in the decades ahead, she said.

Cybersecurity breaches emerge as top risk for India Inc: Survey

BENGALURU, DHNS

Growing pressure across technology, governance and workforce are increasingly influencing organisational priorities as per the FICCI-EY Risk Survey 2026 'Risk outlook - A compass to India's risk landscape'. The report draws on inputs from senior leaders across sectors, on factors affecting pricing, supply chains, talent strategies and technology investments, making risk management central to business strategy.

Cybersecurity breaches and attacks are identified as the top risk shaping organisational performance, cited by 51% of respondents. This is followed closely by changing customer demands and expectations at 49%, while 48% point to geopolitical events as a key risk factor.

Technology risk is now tightly linked to operational continuity. The survey shows that 61% of respondents feel that rapid technological change and digital disruption are affecting their competitive position, while an equal proportion (61%) identify cyber-attacks and data breaches as major financial and reputational threats. More than half, 57%, report potential data theft and insider fraud as significant risks, and 47% acknowledge difficulty in addressing increasingly sophisticated cyber threats.

Artificial intelligence is emerging as a dual risk area, where both under-adoption and weak governance are sources of concern. The survey indicates that 60% of respondents believe inadequate adoption of emerging technologies, including AI, can adversely impact operational effectiveness. At the same time, 54% feel AI-related risks, including ethical and governance issues, are not being effectively managed.

Nearly 45% of respondents cite financial impact due to climate change as a critical risk to their operations in India. 44% believe non-compliance with ESG disclosure mandates and reporting requirements may have a significant impact. Additionally, 42% executives expressed concerns around effectiveness of board oversight on ESG-related issues.

Sudhakar Rajendran, Risk Consulting Leader, EY India said, organisations are navigating a phase where multiple risks are converging rather than occurring in isolation.

"Inflation, cyber threats, AI governance, climate exposure and regulatory change are interacting in ways that directly influence India Inc's performance and resilience. Boards are being pushed to strengthen oversight, improve data quality and integrate resilience into core strategy. The survey shows that leaders who increasingly recognise risk management as a strategic capability, shall be poised for long-term competitiveness," he said.

DH INTERVIEW

'Simple, low-ticket products can address affordability issue in insurance'

Despite regulatory liberalisation and reforms, insurance penetration in India remains among the lowest, accounting for just around 3.7% of the country's GDP, against the global average of over 7.3%. **Sameer Mathur**, Managing Director and founder of a fintech firm Roinet Solution, believes that the insurance ecosystem in India has remained largely sales-led, limiting trust and adoption. In an interview with **Gyanendra Keshri** of *DH*, Mathur said the problem in India is not affordability, but product design, distribution incentives and claims experience. He also delved on the role of fintech in financial inclusion and driving adoption of low-ticket insurance. Edited excerpts:

How do you see the announcements in the Union Budget for fintech and insurance sector?

The Budget maintains continuity in strengthening India's digital public infrastructure, with recognition of platforms such as UPI that have significantly expanded access to financial services and supported the growth of the fintech ecosystem. At the same time, there is scope for greater clarity on the roadmap for fintech's next phase of evolution, particularly across lending, wealth creation and insurance, which are critical to advancing financial inclusion. Enhanced policy support for players building infrastructure to expand reach in smaller towns and underserved segments could further improve last-mile access. Greater emphasis on resource allocation towards education and MSME development would also contribute to long-term economic resilience. A more integrated policy approach could help fintech play a stronger role in enabling inclusive and sustainable growth.

What needs to be done to boost insurance penetration in India?

Insurance cannot be introduced in isolation. Financial inclusion must come first. Once people have access to basic banking and income stability, they are more open to protection products. Affordability is addressed by designing simple, low-ticket ("chota") insurance products that match the real needs of rural households—health, accident, crop, and general insurance. We deliberately avoid complex products and focus on what people genuinely require.

How do you tackle trust and mis-selling issues in insurance?

This is a critical concern. We address it in three ways: (a) Simple product design: No complex clauses. Customers clearly know what they pay and what they get, (b) Direct customer education: We create explanatory videos and digital communication so customers understand products even if an agent misses something, and (c) Independent policy verification: We have partnered with a third-party company that reviews policies using OCR and provides customers with a simple summary of inclusions, exclusions, and suitability—for a small fee.

What are your expansion plans and targets going forward?

We already have a strong on-ground infrastructure built over the last 8–10 years, including a vast network of customer service points. We currently work with around 70,000 partners and agents, serving nearly 4 crore customers. We started with Uttar Pradesh and Bihar and are now expanding to eastern, western, and southern regions. Over the next two months, we plan to launch 2–3 additional health insurance products and gradually scale pan-India.

Sameer Mathur

How do you see the Indian market opportunity for your company?

From a company point of view, the opportunity in India, especially in rural and underserved communities, is enormous. Around 700–800 million people still lack access to comprehensive financial services. Our belief is that access to basic financial services should be a right, not a privilege. Over the past decade, we have focused on financial inclusion, ensuring people can access savings accounts, basic banking, and cash management. Now that livelihoods in rural India are improving, the timing is right to introduce other essential financial services, particularly insurance, in a meaningful and responsible way.

Why is your focus more on general and health insurance?

General and health insurance meet immediate and visible needs in rural communities. Health expenses or accidents can push families into distress overnight. Penetration in these categories is still very low, despite government schemes. Our focus is to bridge this gap by offering basic, understandable products that complement existing coverage rather than replace it.

How do your offerings complement government schemes like Ayushman Bharat?

Government schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) have achieved significant coverage. However, Ayushman Bharat faces operational challenges, including hospital participation and delayed reimbursements. While these schemes provide a basic safety net, many gaps remain. Our role is to complement government programmes by offering additional protection layers tailored to real-world needs, especially where public schemes fall short.

TOP PICKS

The data is sourced from Motilal Oswal Financial Services Limited

SAIL
(ID: SAIL)
Upside +10%**
BUY
Last close ₹159
Target: ₹175*

Ventive Hospitality
(ID: VENTIVE)
Upside +30%**
BUY
Last close ₹772
Target: ₹1,000*

Syrma SGS Technology
(ID: SYRMA)
Upside +16%**
BUY
Last close ₹862
Target: ₹1,000*

ICICI Bank
(ID: ICICIBANK)
Upside +24%**
BUY
Last close ₹1,408
Target: ₹1,750*

Delhivery
(ID: DELHIVERY)
Upside +34%**
BUY
Last close ₹434
Target: ₹580*

* Target price has been calculated on the basis of fundamentals ** Upside refers to more value stock is expected to generate than its current price

No change in taxes: It is time to focus on post-tax returns

The much-awaited budget has come and gone without any tax changes, much to the disappointment of many. Given that a very small number of Indians pay tax and with all the changes done last year, any more concessions seemed unlikely. Now that the budget is done with, with the changing socio-economic environment, it is time to shift attention to financial future proofing. With every asset class showing volatility, the need of the hour is to check if one's finances can withstand the variability in the markets.

Start with assessing the portfolio at an overall level to check if it is beating inflation. Investors tend to extrapolate equity returns to overall portfolio returns. A portfolio with 10% in equities and 90% in safe instruments like deposits & insurance schemes may yield 6-6.5% per annum, which means it is not beating inflation. Over tax savings, investments beating inflation needs to be prioritised to grow wealth to be able to meet life goals.

With almost every asset class booming in the last couple of years, one might have picked up various instruments and with the fall now, it is a good time to assess whether the investments made have a place in the portfolio. For instance, if someone has recently invested in a silver ETF, the key question is whether it is a tactical allocation or part of their core portfolio. If it is a core investment, which financial goal should it be aligned with?

MRIN AGARWAL
DIRECTOR, FINSAFE INDIA

Volatile markets can actually be a good moment to reflect upon and exit impulse investments because volatility exposes whether the investment had a real purpose or was just a reaction. When markets are doing well, risk feels easier to take. When markets swing, that same risk can suddenly feel uncomfortable.

Markets are unpredictable but your behaviour and decisions don't have to be. Instead of reacting to market noise, focus on controllable decisions like how much to invest, where and for how long. Build a goal based investment plan which balances risk and returns. Be mindful of returns expectations. Returns across asset classes have been strong in the recent years, but such performance should not be assumed as a norm. It is important to reset expectations closer to long-term averages.

The key focus in any investment should be on post-tax, post-expense returns and alignment with risk and goals. Often schemes are chosen based on tax deduction benefits without considering whether the actual returns earned post tax would be favourable or if they align with financial goals.

As uncertainty continues to be a defining feature of markets, ensuring your investment strategy is built for long-term resilience has never been more important.

FPIs turn net buyers in Feb; invest Rs 8,100 cr

NEW DELHI, PTI: After three consecutive months of heavy selling, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) turned net buyers in the first week of February, infusing more than Rs 8,100 crore in Indian equities, aided by improving risk sentiment, along with a trade deal with the US.

The inflows follow sustained withdrawals in recent months, with FPIs pulling out Rs 35,962 crore in January, Rs 22,611 crore in December, and Rs 3,765 crore in November, data with the depositories showed.

Overall, in 2025, FPIs pulled out a net Rs 1.66 lakh crore ($18.9 billion) from Indian equities, marking one of the worst periods for foreign flows. The selling was driven by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, concerns over potential US tariffs and stretched equity valuations.

According to the data, FPIs invested Rs 8,129 crore in this month (till February 6).

Himanshu Srivastava, principal manager- research at Morningstar Investment Research India, said the recent buying reflects improving risk appetite and renewed confidence in India's growth outlook.

"The sentiment was supported by easing global uncertainties, stability in domestic interest rate expectations, and optimism around India-US trade and policy developments," he added.

The turnaround contrasts sharply with January's outflows, when FPIs exited Indian markets amid a global risk-off environment and elevated US bond yields.

Echoing similar views, Vaqarjaved Khan, senior fundamental analyst at Angel One, said the breakthrough in India-US trade talks helped reduce geopolitical uncertainty and fuel a market rally, alongside stabilising US yields and supportive measures announced in the Union Budget for FY26, including fiscal stimulus and sector-specific incentives.

The rupee strengthened from a record low of 90.30 against the dollar.

Budget 2026 aims to position India as global healthcare hub

The sector gets more than Rs 1 lakh crore to strengthen health systems

LALIT MISTRY

The Union Budget 2026-27 reflects the evolving priorities of India's healthcare sector, reinforcing efforts to strengthen the healthcare workforce and infrastructure. It also aims to make the sector future-ready by positioning India as a growing hub for medical tourism and biopharma. In doing so, the budget continues the reform agenda to enhance the health system and elevate India's role in global healthcare and biopharma innovation.

This year, the government has allocated Rs 1,06,530 crore to the MoHFW, which is a 10% increase over the previous year, and constitutes 2% of the overall budget. The Department of Health and Family Welfare is allocated about Rs 1,01,709 crore, an increase of 9% over the last year. The Department of Health Research received approximately Rs 4,821 crore, a 23% rise. Government of India continues to its commitment of reducing out-of-pocket expenditure and enhancing digital health through higher allocations to AB-PMJAY and ABDM respectively.

The budget prioritises certain healthcare workforce and infrastructure measures, including:

- **Biopharma SHAKTI**: A Rs 10,000-crore, five-year programme to position India as a global biopharma hub by boosting capabilities in biologics, biosimilars, and clinical research. It includes three new NIPERs, upgrades to seven existing ones, and a network of 1,000+ accredited clinical trial sites.
- **Regional medical tourism hubs**: The Economic Survey 2025-26 highlighted that medical tourist arrivals rose from about 1.12 lakh in 2009 to over 6 lakh in 2024, reflecting a CAGR of roughly 12.4%. For enhancing medical tourism, five integrated medical hubs across India shall be developed with private-sector participation.
- **Future healthcare workforce**: The budget targets to scale-up and elevate caregiving services by training 1.5 lakh caregivers through NSQF-aligned programmes that build a stronger care ecosystem by equipping caregivers with core care skills such as wellness, yoga, and the operation of medical and assistive devices. In addition, existing AHP institutions will be strengthened, and new ones will be established across public and private sectors with a Rs 1,000 crore outlay, adding about 1 lakh professionals across 10 disciplines.
- **Emergency & trauma care**: Data by NITI Aayog (2018) suggests that Emergency and injury cases account for 9-13% of all patients visiting health facilities. As part of the new announcements, district hospitals will see a 50% expansion in emergency and trauma care capacity through dedicated centres to reduce financial burden on vulnerable families.
- **All India Institutes of Ayurveda**: Three new institutes will be established, alongside upgrades to AYUSH pharmacies and drug-testing labs, and enhancements to the WHO Global Traditional Medicine Centre in Jamnagar.

In addition to these futuristic initiatives, the Government has also raised allocations for key public health programmes and institutions:

National Health Mission: NHM received approximately Rs 39,390 crore, with an increase of 6% from FY25-26.

National Tele Mental Health Programme: The mental health programme of India saw a 14% increase in budget allocation, amounting to approximately Rs 51 crore compared to Rs 45 crore in financial year 2025-26.

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM): It received a slightly increased allocation of approximately Rs 350 crore in FY 2026-27 compared to Rs 324 crore in FY 2025-26 (8% increase).

Indian Council of Medical Research: Major budget allocation of Rs 4,000 crore to the ICMR which has increased by nearly 27% over the last year.

Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY): Allocation has been raised from Rs 9,000 crore in 2025-26 to Rs 9,500 crore in 2026-27 (6% increase).

The Budget creates a more predictable and compliance efficient tax environment, encouraging long-term investment in biopharma, med-tech, and healthcare manufacturing. It also brings some relief to patients by removing Basic Customs Duty on 17 life-saving cancer drugs, and further extending duty exemptions to seven additional rare diseases. It sets a strong trajectory for India's healthcare future, combining increasing allocations with strong initiatives in biopharma, emergency care, and medical tourism. Overall, these measures aim to encourage investment, improve healthcare access, streamline compliance and strengthen India's global supply-chain position.

(The writer is Partner and Co–Head, Healthcare Sector, KPMG in India)

WEEK AHEAD

Markets to remain firm on conclusion of US trade deal

Last week, equity markets traded with a positive bias, supported by selective buying

SIDDHARTHA KHEMKA

Indian equity markets are expected to open the week on a firmer note, as macro sentiment improves following the announcement of the long-awaited Indo–US trade deal, coming soon after the conclusion of the Indo–EU Free Trade Agreement. While volatility may persist around key global macro data releases and US Federal Reserve commentary, the broader tone for domestic markets has turned more constructive, aided by easing trade-related uncertainty and improving risk appetite across equities, currency and capital flows. With the Q3 earnings season approaching its conclusion, stock-specific movements are likely to remain in focus, with results awaited from companies such as BSE, SBI and Grasim, among others. Key events to watch this week include important US economic data and FOMC member, Fed Waller speaks, India's WPI inflation data for January—covering food, fuel and manufacturing components—and trends in equity market flows.

Last week, equity markets traded with a positive bias, supported by improved global sentiment and selective buying. Benchmark indices ended higher, with the Sensex gaining 1.5% and the Nifty50 rising 1.4%. Broader markets also saw healthier participation, as the Nifty Midcap100 advanced 1.8%, while the Nifty Smallcap100 gained 1.0%, indicating a gradual improvement in risk appetite among investors.

Among sectoral indices, IT and PSU Bank were the top laggards, declining 8.0% and 2.3% respectively. IT stocks underperformed as global technology sentiment weakened following earnings-related concerns around AI-driven disruption to traditional software and services revenues, alongside cautious guidance from global technology research firms. Metal stocks also ended lower, down 1.5%, amid a correction in non-ferrous and precious metal prices. In contrast, cyclical and rate-sensitive sectors outperformed, led by Realty and Energy, which gained 7.1% and 5.1% respectively, followed by Infrastructure, which rose 5.1% on expectations of stable interest rates, strong domestic demand and sustained government capital expenditure. Auto stocks advanced 2.9%, supported by resilient demand, improving rural sentiment and stable input costs. Media and private banks gained 2.3% and 1.8% respectively, while Financial Services, Pharma, Bank and FMCG indices posted gains of around 1%, reflecting broader but still selective participation across sectors.

On the earnings front, the results from companies accounting for nearly two-thirds of Nifty profits show earnings growth of about 7% year-on-year, broadly in line with expectations, led by strength in metals, oil and gas, automobiles, technology and BFSI.

The Indo–US trade deal announcement marks a significant inflection point for India's external sector and equity markets. Composite tariffs on Indian goods exported to the US have been sharply reduced from around 50% to about 18%, with punitive levies fully rolled back. This shifts India from being one of the most tariff-disadvantaged exporters to among the more competitive suppliers in the US market, providing a relative advantage over peers such as China, Vietnam, Brazil, Thailand and South Africa.

The timing of the announcement—earlier than widely anticipated—has provided a meaningful boost to market sentiment, particularly after a prolonged phase of foreign investor outflows, currency weakness and emerging market underperformance. Beyond the near-term reaction, the easing of trade uncertainty is expected to support capital flows, improve export visibility and strengthen investor confidence. Strategically, the Indo–US agreement, alongside the Indo–EU FTA and earlier trade pacts with the UK, EFTA and New Zealand, reinforces India's positioning in an increasingly bilateral global trade environment.

Export-oriented sectors are expected to be key beneficiaries of the improved trade outlook. Auto ancillaries, textiles, electronics manufacturing services, consumer goods, defence manufacturing and IT services are likely to gain from higher export volumes, improved market access and operating leverage. Financials and utilities may benefit indirectly as export-led growth supports credit demand and broader economic activity.

India's textile sector appears to be at a turning point. With the US accounting for nearly 30% of India's textile exports, the reduction in tariffs has materially improved competitiveness across segments such as home textiles, man-made fibre products, cotton blends and technical textiles. Combined with ongoing capacity additions and a nascent investment cycle, textile exports are projected to rise from around $36 billion to $45–50 billion over the next three years.

Market sentiment has also been shaped by the Union Budget for FY2026–27, which broadly stayed the course on fiscal discipline. The government retained a realistic nominal GDP growth assumption of around 10% and projected a marginal reduction in the fiscal deficit to 4.3% of GDP from 4.4% in FY26 (revised estimate). While higher-than-expected gross market borrowing of Rs 17.2 lakh crore raised some concerns, the budget maintained its focus on capital expenditure, with outlays of Rs 12.2 lakh crore for FY27, particularly in defence, railways, roads and infrastructure.

On the monetary policy front, the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee held its first policy review of 2026 last week, keeping the repo rate unchanged at 5.25% and retaining a neutral stance. The central bank highlighted the need to balance moderating inflation trends with global uncertainties, while noting that recent trade agreements have supported the near-term outlook for growth.

Commodity markets also saw some cooling off, with gold and silver prices correcting as a stronger US dollar and softer broader market sentiment prompted investors to trim exposure to precious metals. Domestically, India's WPI inflation data and trends in equity market flows will be closely watched for cues on inflation and sentiment, while globally, attention will shift to upcoming US economic data and commentary from Federal Reserve officials.

(The writer is Head of Research, Wealth Management, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd)

DH INTERVIEW

'Cloud-based data, AI pipelines make development easier'

Indian enterprises are quickly adopting cloud, moving beyond cost-saving to using it for Artificial Intelligence, digital platforms, and better customer experiences, said **Anant Adya**, EVP and Service Offering Head, Infosys. In an interaction with **Uma Kannan** of *DH*, Adya said BFSI, healthcare, and government sectors are leading this change, driven by the need for scalability and innovation.

How is cloud evolving from an IT enabler to the core operating model for AI-led enterprises?

Cloud has moved from being a cost-saving tool to the core system for AI-led enterprises, driving innovation and growth. It turns data into valuable assets using AI, IoT, and edge computing, making it easier to scale AI applications and explore new markets. Cloud now manages data, models, security, and costs on a single platform. With AI increasing cloud usage, designing cloud, AI, and composable services together ensures speed, control, and consistent value, making cloud the foundation of modern businesses.

You talk about building "fluid and tireless enterprises." What does that actually mean for business leaders today?

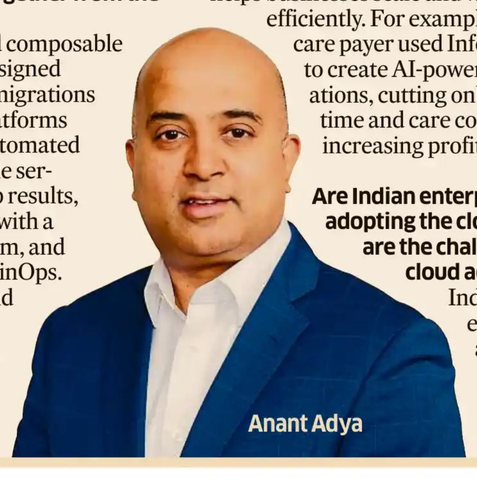
A fluid, timeless enterprise uses AI and cloud to connect data and security, making businesses more flexible, strong, and sustainable. It updates applications for real-time use, connects systems to speed up launches, and uses AI to meet customer needs and grow efficiently. For leaders, this means quicker decisions, stronger operations, and steady growth. AI helps businesses focus on customers and work together, creating adaptable and future-ready organisations.

What changes when cloud, AI, and composable architectures are designed to work together from the start?

When cloud, AI, and composable architectures are designed together, they turn migrations into ready-to-use platforms with shared data, automated policies, and reusable services. This speeds up results, improves reliability with a unified control system, and reduces costs with FinOps. Cloud-based data and AI pipelines make development easier, while modular services ensure security. In the end, the cloud becomes the main system for AI – organised, flexible, and built for ongoing growth.

Do many enterprises struggle with composable cloud adoption, and how is Infosys helping bridge that gap?

Enterprises struggle with composable clouds due to siloed data, lack of skills, and fragmented systems, leading to inefficiencies and higher costs. Infosys solves this with Infosys Cobalt, offering a unified control system, automated workloads, and cost management tools like FinOps. By enabling AI-first systems and reusable services, Infosys helps businesses scale and work more efficiently. For example, a healthcare payer used Infosys Cobalt to create AI-powered operations, cutting onboarding time and care costs while increasing profits.



Are Indian enterprises adopting the cloud? What are the challenges in cloud adoption?

Indian enterprises are quickly adopting cloud, moving beyond cost-saving to using it for AI, digital platforms, and better customer experiences. BFSI, healthcare, and government sectors are leading this change, driven by the need for scalability and innovation. However, challenges like managing costs, meeting data security rules, skill gaps, and outdated systems remain. Data sovereignty adds complexity. Despite these issues, cloud-first strategies and local data centre investments are helping businesses adopt cloud smoothly and unlock its full potential.

Which industries are seeing the most impact from cloud- and AI-driven transformation, and why?

According to Infosys' AI Business Value Radar 2025 report, industries like life sciences, professional services, manufacturing, financial services, and retail are leading cloud and AI transformation. Life sciences are improving drug discovery and care, professional services are increasing productivity with AI, manufacturing is boosting efficiency with IoT, financial services are enhancing fraud detection, and retail is improving supply chains and customer experiences. Success in these industries relies on strong data systems, skilled teams, and cloud as the key to scaling AI.

Iran defies US threats on uranium enrichment

Tehran doubts Washington's seriousness in negotiations

PARIS, AFP

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on Sunday ruled out Tehran ever giving up uranium enrichment in its negotiations with Washington, insisting it will not be intimidated by the threat of war with the United States.

Araghchi told a forum in Tehran attended by AFP that Iran had little trust in Washington and doubted that the US side was taking renewed negotiations seriously.

He later said Iran was consulting with its "strategic partners" China and Russia about the talks.

"Why do we insist so much on enrichment and refuse to give it up, even if a war is imposed on us? Because no one has the right to dictate our behaviour," Araghchi said at the forum.

"Their military deployment in the region does not scare us," he added, referring to the arrival of an aircraft carrier, the USS Abraham Lincoln, in the Arabian Sea. The United States and Iran reopened negotiations on Friday in Oman for the first time since Israel's 12-day war with the Islamic republic in June of last year, which the US briefly joined.

Iran is seeking to have US economic sanctions on the country lifted, in exchange for what Araghchi said at the forum could be "a series of confidence-building measures concerning the nuclear programme".

Western countries and Israel, thought to be the Middle East's only country with nuclear weapons, say Iran is seeking to acquire an atomic bomb, which the Islamic republic denies.

Nobel Peace winner faces fresh jail term

Iran sentenced Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi to over seven more years in prison after she began a hunger strike, supporters said Sunday, as Tehran cracks down on all dissent following nationwide protests and the deaths of thousands at the hands of security forces, reports AP.

Japan's 'Iron Lady' records stunning win

Takaichi aims to nurture US ties as China tensions grow

TOKYO, AP

The governing party of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi secured a more than two-thirds majority in a key parliamentary election on Sunday, Japanese media reported, citing preliminary results.

Takaichi, in a televised interview with public television network NHK, said that after the sweeping victory she is now ready to pursue her policies.

NHK, citing results of vote counts, said Takaichi's Liberal Democratic Party, or LDP, alone secured 316 seats by early Monday, comfortably surpassing a 261-seat absolute majority in the 465-member lower house, the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber parliament. That marks a record since the party's foundation in 1955 and surpasses the previous record of 300 seats won in 1986 by late Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone.

A smiling Takaichi placed a big red ribbon above each winner's name on a signboard at the LDP's headquarters, as accompanying party executives applauded.

Despite the lack of a majority in the other chamber, the upper house, the huge jump from the preelection share in the superior lower house would allow Takaichi to make progress on a right-wing agenda that aims to boost Japan's economy and military capabilities as tensions grow with China and she tries to nurture ties with the United States.

Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, leader of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, places a red paper rose on the name of an elected candidate at the LDP headquarters on general election day in Tokyo on Sunday. REUTERS

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

"Congratulations Sanae Takaichi on your landmark victory in the elections to the House of Representatives. I am confident that under your able leadership, we will continue to take the India-Japan friendship to greater heights.

FBI concludes Epstein didn't run sex trafficking ring for powerful men

NEW YORK, AP

The FBI pored over Jeffrey Epstein's bank records and emails. It searched his homes. It spent years interviewing his victims and examining his connections to some of the world's most influential people.

But while investigators collected ample proof that Epstein sexually abused underage girls, they found scant evidence the well-connected financier led a sex trafficking ring serving powerful men, an Associated Press review of internal Justice Department records shows.

Videos and photos seized from Epstein's homes in New York, Florida and the Virgin Islands didn't depict victims being abused or implicate anyone else in his crimes, a prosecutor wrote in one 2025 memo.

An examination of Epstein's financial records, including payments he made to entities linked to influential figures in academia, finance and global diplomacy, found no connection to criminal activity, said another internal memo in 2019. While one Epstein victim made highly public claims that he "lent her" to his rich friends, agents couldn't confirm that and found no other victims telling a similar story, the records said.

Summarizing the investigation in an email last July, agents said "four or five" Epstein accusers claimed other men or women had sexually abused them. But, the agents said, there "was not enough evidence to federally charge these individuals, so the cases were referred to local law enforcement."

The AP and other media organizations are still reviewing millions of pages of documents, many of them previously confidential, that the Justice Department released under the Epstein Files Transparency Act and it is possible those records contain evidence overlooked by investigators.

UK PM's top aide quits over Mandelson's links to Epstein

LONDON, REUTERS: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's chief of staff, Morgan McSweeney, quit on Sunday, saying he took responsibility for advising the appointment of Peter Mandelson as U.S. ambassador despite Mandelson's known links to Jeffrey Epstein.

Starmer is facing what is widely seen as the gravest crisis of his 18 months in power over his decision to send Mandelson to Washington in 2024, after files revealed the depth of the Labour veteran's relationship with the late sex offender Epstein.

US appeals court allows Trump administration to detain immigrants without bond

WASHINGTON, AP

President Donald Trump's administration can continue to detain immigrants without bond, marking a major legal victory for the federal immigration agenda and countering a slew of recent lower court decisions across the country that argued the practice is illegal.

A panel of judges on the 5th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled on Friday evening that the Department of Homeland Security's decision to deny bond hearings to immigrants arrested across the country is consistent with the constitution and federal immigration law.

Specifically, circuit judge Edith H Jones wrote in the 2-1 majority opinion that the government correctly interpreted the Immigration and Nationality Act by asserting that "unadmitted aliens apprehended anywhere in the US are ineligible for release on bond, regardless of how long they have resided inside the US." Under past administrations, most non-citizens with no criminal record who were arrested away from the border had an opportunity to request a bond hearing while their cases wound through immigration court. Historically, bond was often granted to those without criminal convictions who were not flight risks, and mandatory detention was limited to recent border crossers.

"That prior administrations decided to use less than their full enforcement authority under" the law "does not mean they lacked the authority to do more," Jones wrote.

The plaintiffs in the two separate cases filed last year against Trump administration were both Mexican nationals who had both lived in the US for over 10 years and weren't flight risks, their attorneys argued. Neither man had a criminal record, and both were jailed for months last year before a lower Texas court granted them bond in October.

B'desh seeks UN help for fair probe into Hadi's killing

DHAKA, PTI: Bangladesh's interim government of Muhammad Yunus has sought the cooperation of the UN human rights office for a fair and transparent investigation into the killing of student leader Sharif Osman Hadi, a media report said on Sunday.

Hadi, 32, spokesperson of Inqilab Moncho, who rose to national prominence during the July-August 2024 mass protests that led to the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League regime, was shot in the head on December 12 during an election campaign in Dhaka.

The interim government has sought the cooperation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to ensure a proper investigation over Hadi's killing, state-run BSS reported.

The Permanent Mission of Bangladesh in Geneva on Friday sent an official Note Verbale to the OHCHR, the Chief Adviser's Press Wing said.

WORLD AT A GLANCE

Thailand's Prime Minister and Bhumjaithai Party leader Anutin Charnvirakul speaks to journalists in Bangkok on Sunday. Anutin rode to election victory on a wave of nationalism. AFP

Stabbed Indian students stable, recovering in Russia

▸ Four Indian medical students, who were injured in a stabbing spree by a juvenile in a Russian university, are "stable and recovering well," the Indian mission said here on Sunday, reports PTI from Moscow.

These four Indians were among at least six people injured in the stabbing attack on Saturday at the State Medical University in Ufa, about 1,200 km east of the Russian capital, in Bashkortostan Republic.

Indian Consular officials from Kazan on Sunday visited the four students at the hospital where they were taken after the stabbing incident.

"They are stable and recovering well. Our consul officer met them today in the hospital and also met other students in the hostel," the Indian mission here said. "We are in regular touch with them." The attacker, a 15-year old student of class IX of a local school, armed with a knife entered the medical university dormitory on Repina Street in Ufa and attacked the students living there

'Feels like you're in Pak, not Dallas'

▸ An American lawmaker has voiced concern over the "Islamisation" of areas in certain constituencies in the US state of Texas, saying visiting local malls there "feels like you're in Pakistan, not Dallas", reports PTI from New York

"I hear from constituents all the time who are deeply and desperately concerned about the Islamisation of the Dallas area." Congressman Brandon Gill said during an interview with Real America's Voice on Friday. The Republican lawmaker said his constituents are hearing about "mosques that are popping up near land that they or their family have owned for generations."

Members of the Salvadoran military provide security outside the Jorge 'Mágico' González National Stadium ahead of the first concert of Colombian singer Shakira's tour in El Salvador, in San Salvador. AFP

SPORT

Johnson too Breezy to stop

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO (ITALY), AFP

Breezy Johnson won the gold medal in the alpine skiing downhill at the Winter Olympics on Sunday after Lindsey Vonn's comeback ended with a horror crash.

American Johnson, already the reigning downhill world champion, clocked 1min 36.10sec in an early run to claim her first Olympic medal on a bittersweet day for the US team in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Johnson had never claimed a podium spot in Cortina before Sunday but outshone the rest of the field from sixth on the starting list, pipping Germany's rising star Emma Aicher by just 0.04sec.

Home hope Sofia Goggia had to settle for bronze after finishing 0.59sec behind Johnson following a long wait for her run due to Vonn's dreadful crash.

Johnson is in the odd position of having never won a World Cup race but is now world and Olympic champion in her preferred discipline.

Maderova shines

Czech snowboarder Zuzana Maderova won gold in the Olympic women's parallel giant slalom after the shock exit of defending champion Ester Ledecka.

The 22-year-old Maderova enjoyed a comfortable victory over Ledecka's conqueror Sabine Payer, cruising to victory by 0.83 seconds.

Italy's Lucia Dalmasso took bronze.

USA's Breezy Johnson in action during her gold medal show in the women's downhill at Tofane Alpine Skiing Centre in Belluno, Italy on Sunday. REUTERS

SHOOTING ASIAN RIFLE/PISTOL CHAMPIONSHIPS

Elavenil, Arjun gun down gold

Himanshu, Shambhavi win in the junior mixed team category

NEW DELHI, PTI

Olympians Elavenil Valarivan and Arjun Babuta proved an unstoppable pair, clinching the 10m air rifle mixed team gold with a flawless display as Indian shooters continued their dominance at the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championships on Sunday.

Riding India's winning wave, Himanshu Dhillon and Shambhavi Kshirsagar clinched the junior category gold in the same event at the Karni Singh Ranges.

From left: India's Harsh Gupta (silver), Gurpreet Singh (gold) and Amanpreet Singh swept the medals in the men's 25m standard pistol at the Asian Rifle/Pistol Championships in New Delhi on Sunday. NRAI

Elavenil, fresh off her gold in the women's air rifle on Saturday, fired 253.4 from 24 shots in the four-team final, while Babuta recovered from a shaky start in the medal round to finish strongly with 251.6, sealing their gold.

Himanshu and Shambhavi added a mixed team gold to their individual triumphs on Saturday, cruising through the final to post a commanding aggregate of 502.4, which was an Asian Junior Record.

In the men's 25m standard pistol final, Indian shooters had a clean sweep with Gurpreet Singh clinching the gold medal ahead of Harsh Gupta (silver) and Amanpreet Singh respectively.

Gurpeet shot a total of 575, including 16 inner circle shots, to finish four points ahead of his nearest rival.

Pradeep Chouhan-trained Ultimo wins main event

MUMBAI RESULTS

Pradeep Chouhan-trained Ultimo, ridden by Neeraj Rawal, won the Mathardas Goculdas Trophy, the feature event of the Mumbai races on Sunday.

1. Sonny Brar Trophy - 2000M: Golden Dancer (DR Thacker) Akshay Kumar 1; Endurance (Yash Narredu) 2; Exuma (Nikhil Parmar) 3; Kimiko (C Umesh) 4; Wb: 1-1/2, 3/4, 1L. T: 2:04.62. TB: Dallas Todywalla. Fav: Golden Dancer.

2. Mathardas Goculdas Trophy - 1400M: Ultimo (Rajesh Monga) Neeraj Rawal 1; Market King (G Vivek) 2; Irish Gold (Trevor Patel) 3; Ataasj (A Omkar) 4; Wb: Shd, 3/4, 1-3/4L. T: 1:22.04. TB: Pradeep Chouhan. Fav: Ultimo.

3. Nadir & Yawar Rashid Trophy - 1400M: Bishop (Mrs Liane Luthria) G Vivek 1; Amazing Ruler (Merchant) 2; Rambler (Aditya Waydande) 3; Seneca (Trevor Patel) 4; Wb: 1/2, 1-1/2, 1/2L. 1:23.09. TB: Pesi Shroff. Fav: Bishop.

4. RM & Rukmani Goculdas Million - 1200M: Silver Strike (Mrs Seema Kamesh) C Umesh 1; Interceptor (S Kamble) 2; Starseed (Trevor Patel) 3; Escape Velocity (Santosh) 4; Wb: 3/4, 1/2, 1-1/2L. T: 1:10.36. TB: Faisal Abbas. Fav: Starseed.

5. NM Irani Trophy - 1200M: Storm Majesty (Mrs Pragy Devgan) Trevor Patel 1; Paloma (Yash Narredu) 2; Organised Chaos (N Jodha) 3; Ace In The Field (Akshay Kumar) 4; Wb: 1-3/4, 3/4, 3-1/2L. T: 1:10.69. TB: Aman Altaf Hussain. Fav: Ace In The Field.

6. Nawabzada Rashiduzzafar Khan Trophy - 1600M: Merchant Of Venice (Jiyaj Bhosale) Nirmal Jodha 1; Marius (Kirtish Bhagat) 2; Treasure Gold (A Omkar) 3; Bravo Zulu (Trevor Patel) 4; Wb: Nk, 1-1/4, Lnk. T: 1:36.79. TB: Adhirajsingh Jodha. Fav: Bravo Zulu.

7. SA Wahid Plate - 1000M: Sentinel (Ramaswamy Charitable Trust) Bhawani Singh 1; Viennoise (G Vivek) 2; Samson (A Prakash) 3; Precioso (TS Jodha) 4; Wb: Shd, 1-3/4L, Lnk. T: 0:58.68. TB: Karthik Ganapathy. Fav: AR First Star.

Bengaluru dividends:

I race: Rs 12w; 11, 12p; Fc: Rs 18; Q: Rs 13; Shp: Rs 14; Thp: Rs 17; Tri: Rs 19 & 13;

II race: Rs 16w; 10, 39p; Fc: Rs 42; Q: Rs 28; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 29; Tri: Rs 195 & 76; Ex: Rs 346 & 134.

III race: Rs 15w; 12, 13, 16p; Fc: Rs 32; Q: Rs 26; Shp: Rs 28; Thp: Rs 44; Tri: Rs 163 & 94; Ex: Rs 279 & 97.

IV race: Rs 31w; 15, 22, 13p; Fc: Rs 261; Q: Rs 127; Shp: Rs 57; Thp: Rs 54; Tri: Rs 277 & 67; Ex: Rs 2,013 & 1,232.

V race: Rs 44w; 17, 13, 11p; Fc: Rs 163; Q: Rs 51; Shp: Rs 31; Thp: Rs 50; Tri: Rs 461 & 193; Ex: Rs 780 & 360.

VI race: Rs 58w; 17, 21, 55p; Fc: Rs 717; Q: Rs 393; Shp: Rs 48; Thp: Rs 162; Tri: Rs 10,034 & 8,868; Ex: Rs 25,004 & 10,716.

VII race: Rs 86w; 19, 12, 18p; Fc: Rs 182; Q: Rs 80; Shp: Rs 32; Thp: Rs 50; Tri: Rs 886 & 445; Ex: Rs 56,137 & 6,014.

First Jackpot: Rs 64,717 (14).

Runner-up: Rs 983 (395).

Treble: Rs 1,970 (60).

Three Indians in U-19 World Cup Team of the Tournament

DUBAI, PTI: Batting sensation Vaibhav Sooryavanshi **(in pic)** was among the three Indians named in the Team of the Tournament for the ICC Under-19 World Cup on Sunday.

The 14-year-old Sooryavanshi, who scored a majestic 175 from 80 balls in the final against England and was subsequently crowned Player of the Tournament, is joined by compatriots Kanishk Chouhan and Henil Patel in the 12-member team. India won the title for a record extending sixth time.

Chouhan made consistently valuable contributions with bat and ball, while Patel's 11 wickets included a superb spell of five for 16 against the USA.

Runners-up England are also represented by three players, with Thomas Rew named as the captain and wicketkeeper.

Rew scored 330 runs at an average of exactly 66, including a match-winning century in the semi-final against Australia.

U-19 World Cup Team of the Tournament: Vaibhav Sooryavanshi (India), Viran Chamuditha (Sri Lanka), Faisal Khan Shinozada (Afghanistan), Thomas Rew (wk, capt) (England), Oliver Peake (Australia), Ben Mayes (England), Kanishk Chouhan (India), Nooristani Omarzai (Afghanistan), Vitel Lawes (West Indies), Ali Raza (Pakistan), Manny Lumsden (England), Henil Patel (India).

Grand welcome

The victorious U-19 World Cup-winning Indian team returned to a grand welcome with family members of the players and a large number of fans turning up to receive the young heroes here on Sunday.

India won a record-extending sixth title in Harare, Zimbabwe on Friday after defeating England by a massive 100 runs in the final.

Treasure fancied for feature

DELHI SELECTIONS

VS Parmar-trained Treasure, to be ridden by Dhanu Deora, is fancied to win the Mahalakshmi Plate, the feature event of the Delhi races on to be run over a mile at the races on Monday.

The first race starts at 2:15 pm.

1. Gateway Of India Plate - 1100M: Meridia 1, Ashwa Sultan 2, Beat Goes On 3.

2. Juhu Beach Plate (Div I) - 1100M: Cool Water 1, Tequila 2, Master Multifude 3.

3. Juhu Beach Plate (Div II) - 1100M: Tomorrows Dreams 1, Salam Bhai 2, Ashwa Wazeer 3.

4. Mahalakshmi Plate - 1600M: Treasure 1, Rocket Rod 2, Angelo 3.

5. Mumbadevi Plate - 1600M: Dubai Falcon 1, Jet Space 2, Burning Desire 3.

6. Marine Drive Plate - 1000M: Cashier 1, Bay Of Biscay 2, Nizbati Malang 3.

Day's best: Dubai Falcon.

Jackpot: 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6.

Treble: 4, 5 & 6.

Hardik Raj. DH FILE PHOTO

Hardik shines brightest as Karnataka eye outright win

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka, producing an all-round show, put themselves on the cusp of a victory against hosts Uttarakhand on the third day of their Col CK Nayudu Elite Group D fixture at the Kaushiki Cricket Ground in Ramnagar.

After setting Uttarakhand a massive target of 453, Karnataka kept striking at regular intervals, eventually reducing the hosts to 122 for seven in 33 overs at stumps.

Samit Dravid (2/21), Hardik Raj (2/22) and Shashi Kumar K (1/2) picked up six wickets among them.

Earlier, Karnataka, resuming from a precarious 146/6, regained control thanks to a 69-run partnership between Samit (46) and Manvanth Kumar L (38).

Hardik (106 not out) and Yashovardhan Parantap (38 not out) then stitched an unbeaten 123-run stand to bat Uttarakhand out of the contest, declaring on 368/8 in 92 overs.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 244 all out & (O/n: 146/6): 368/8 decl in 92 overs (Prakhar Chaturvedi 31, Dhruv Prabhakar 48, Harshil Dharmani 35, Manvanth Kumar L 34, Samit Dravid 46, Hardik Raj 106 n.o., Yashovardhan Parantap 38 n.o.; Devansh 5-72, Harsh Rana 2-50) vs Uttarakhand: 160 all out & 122/7 in 33 overs (Aditya Naithani 31; Samit Dravid 2-21, Hardik Raj 2-22, Shashi Kumar K 2-1).

Shubha, Niki lead Karnataka to big victory

BENGALURU, DHNS: Skipper S Shubha's 94 and Niki Prasad's 66 and 2/24 proved decisive as Karnataka defeated Baroda by 70 runs in their second Elite Group A match of the Senior Women's One-Day Trophy in Rajkot on Sunday.

Shubha and Niki forged a 120-run stand for the third wicket and laid the foundation for a total of 294/6 in 50 overs as Soumya Verma (51 off 33 balls) and BG Tejashwini (33 off 17) provided fireworks in the slog overs.

In response, Baroda's innings folded at 224 with six overs to spare despite fighting efforts from Poonam Khemnar (79) and Jaya Mohite (69) who added 129 runs for the fourth wicket. However, Baroda chase fell apart once Sahana Pawar (1/36) broke the stand at 183/5, triggering a batting collapse with Tejashwini (3/40) and Niki clearing the tail.

Brief scores: Karnataka: 294/6 in 50 overs (S Shubha 94, Niki Prasad 66, Soumya Verma 51, BG Tejashwini 28 n.o; Shikha Pandey 2-50, Hani Patel 2-55) bt Baroda: 224 all out in 44 overs (Poonam Khemnar 79, Jaya Mohite 69, BG Tejashwini 3-40, Niki Prasad 2-24) by 70 runs. **Karnataka's next match:** Madhya Pradesh (Feb 10).

Services clinch Santosh Trophy

DHAKUAKHANA, PTI: Services defeated Kerala 1-0 in an absorbing final of the 79th National Football Championship for the Santosh Trophy 2025-26 at a jam-packed Dhakuakhana Football Stadium here on Sunday.

This was the eighth time Services won the tournament in their chequered history.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

T20 World Cup: Italy vs Scotland **(11 am)**, Oman vs Zimbabwe **(3 pm)**, South Africa vs Canada **(7 pm)**. **LIVE** on **JioHotstar.**

Ranji Trophy Quarters: Mumbai vs Karnataka, MP vs J&K, Bengal vs Andhra **(day 4, all 9:30 am)**. **LIVE** on **Star Sports** Khel, JioHotstar.

SHOOTING

Asian Rifle/Pistol C'Ships: 10m Air Pistol Mixed Team **(day 6, 10:30 am)**. **LIVE** on **FanCode.**

CRICKET T20 WORLD CUP

MADRID TO MUMBAI
Siraj's dream turns Real

Set for Spain to watch his favourite football club, Hyderabadi gets surprise call for Team India

SIDNEY KIRAN
MUMBAI, DHNS

While cricket fans across the world were planning journeys to India and Sri Lanka to watch their teams compete in the ICC T20 World Cup this month, Mohammed Siraj was charting a different course. Left out of India's T20 set-up, the hard-working fast bowler chose to head to Spain instead -- trading cricket stadiums for football arenas to indulge his long-standing passion for the beautiful game.

A Test regular, who last played a T20I in July 2024 before earning a surprise call on the eve of the World Cup, Siraj was scheduled to fly to Spain to watch his favourite team Real Madrid take on Real Sociedad at the iconic Santiago Bernabeu on February 15. A massive fan of Cristiano Ronaldo, one of Madrid's greatest players, Siraj was looking forward to his trip to the Spanish capital after a gruelling season.

But 'God' had different plans for the effervescent Hyderabadi, a popular member in the dressing room. With Harshit Rana's prognosis not looking great after injuring his knee during a warm-up game against South Africa, skipper Suryakumar Yadav dialled Siraj, asking the 31-year-old to quickly pack his bags and join the squad in Mumbai. Initially, Siraj thought it was a prank until selector Pragyan Ojha confirmed the news.

"Two days ago, Surya *bhai* said, '*Miyan, bags pack kar aur aaja*' (pack your bags and come to Mumbai). I told him, '*Bhai, mazaak mat karo kyon ki yeh to hone wala hai nahi*' (brother, please don't joke as this is not going to happen). But he said, '*Mai sach keh raha hoon, ready ho ja*' (I am telling you the truth, get ready). Then Ojha *bhai* called me," a smiling Siraj said after the opening game against the USA that didn't look possible even until Saturday morning.

"My plan was that on the 15th (of February), there was a Real Madrid match, and I was going to watch it. After that, Ramzan was coming, so I had planned around that. I was spending time with my family. Then Surya bhai called me. Whatever God has written will happen. He has changed my destiny. It was feeling like a dream when I was on the flight, because I had not thought about playing the World Cup."

A big-hearted cricketer who gives it all out on the field irrespective of whether it's the first ball of the day or the last, the fire in Siraj's eyes was visible from the moment he stepped on the field. With pace ace Jasprit Bumrah ruled out after taking ill, the 31-year-old, who led Hyderabad in the final two Ranji Trophy league games, shared the new ball with Arshdeep Singh and picked a wicket with his fourth ball. He finished with 3/29, the best figures by an Indian on the night, seamlessly blending in despite not having played T20s since the IPL last summer.

When asked how he was able to hit the straps without any T20 preparation for over eight months, Siraj felt his decade-long international experience came in handy. "I was happy being called up, but I got to know in the morning that I am playing, so I was a little more excited because I had only arrived yesterday (Friday). The way I was playing in the Ranji Trophy, I was captaining as well, so I wanted to keep myself calm and I was only thinking about how I can put pressure (on US batters) and attack. Whatever I could think of, I was able to execute."

"You have to be mentally ready a lot, especially when you are playing in a World Cup. I am nearing 10 years of playing for India, so when you are getting the opportunity, you do not need much time. As I am playing regularly for India, I know how I have to prepare myself for the format and what mindset to keep. When I went to bed last night, the plan was to use my weapons and I will stick to those (plans) with which I have got success."

Siraj's rise to fame is one of the fairytales of Indian cricket. Son of an auto driver and once perceived as a bowler who had to be constantly told what to do, Siraj has become a leader in his own right. His remarkable return and the ability to deliver instantly on the biggest stage adds another chapter to his growing fame.

Washington to join team in Delhi

MUMBAI, DHNS: The Indian team received a timely boost after skipper Suryakumar Yadav said that injured spinning all-rounder Washington Sundar had received the green signal and would link up with the rest of the squad in New Delhi ahead of the second game against Namibia.

Washington Sundar

Washington suffered a side strain during the opening game of the New Zealand ODI series in January and had been recuperating at BCCI's Centre of Excellence since then.

Defending T20 World Cup champions India take on lightweights Namibia in their second Group A affair at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on February 12 and that game could be a good test for Washington ahead of the bigger battles.

A last-minute injury replacement, Mohammed Siraj played a crucial role in India's win over the USA in their T20 World Cup opener. PTI

Wankhede wicket catches Indians by surprise

SIDNEY KIRAN
MUMBAI, DHNS

The chatter ahead of India's opening T20 World Cup game against the United States of America was how much north of 200 would the defending champions post if they took first strike at the Wankhede Stadium here. Given the short boundaries, a ground famous for seeing big totals and Indian batters' rip-roaring form, it wasn't an outlandish prediction. And when US skipper Monank Patel surprisingly asked the Indians to bat first on Saturday, the expectations were huge. But all of those hopes fell flat when medium pacer Shadley van Schalkwyk scalped three in the final over of Powerplay to reduce India to 46/4. It worsened when India slipped to 77/6 as batter after batter, barring Suryakumar Yadav who struck a magnificent 49-ball 84 not out, struggled on the tacky surface.

The ball wasn't exactly coming onto the bat like it would normally; the two-paced surface making stroke-making difficult. Every time the Indians tried to force the pace, they ended up getting caught, mostly in the deep. Thankfully, the dew didn't kick in and with the pitch behaving the same during the US innings, the vastly experienced Indian bowlers were able to tie them down with disciplined lines and lengths.

Abhishek Sharma

England escape Nepal shock

Curran's brilliant five-run final over hands 4-run win

MUMBAI, PTI

England's Sam Curran (left) exults after sealing the victory for his side as Nepal's Lokesh Bam looks dejected at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Sunday. PTI

Two-time champions England survived a massive scare against a doughty Nepal in their Group C clash of the T20 World Cup, clinching a narrow four-run win in a tense finish to their tournament opener here on Sunday.

Nepal came within touching distance of creating history as they nearly upset one of the teams to beat in the competition, scoring 180/6 in reply to England's 184/7.

Lokesh Bam (39 not out off 20 balls) kept Nepal in the hunt for an upset victory but could not finish the game in the final over after a heroic effort.

Needing 10 runs off the last over, Nepal couldn't find a boundary as their inspired show with the bat ended in a narrow loss. Sam Curran nailed his yorkers relentlessly as all that Nepal could manage were five runs.

Nevertheless, more than 17,000 fans thronged the iconic Wankhede Stadium and witnessed Nepal punching far above their weight, with majority of them being from the Himalayan nation.

Skipper Rohit Paudel (39), Dipendra Singh Airee (39), Kushal Bhurtel (29) and Lokesh, who smashed four boundaries and two sixes in a late assault, fought valiantly but they could not take their side over the line.

Lokesh went hammer and tongs when Nepal's backs were against the wall, hitting two sixes off Jofra Archer's 18th over and two consecutive fours off Luke Wood's penultimate over when they needed 46 runs off the final three overs.

Bhurtel had provided early fireworks while a robust 82-run stand for the third wicket between Paudel and Airee consolidated Nepal.

Even as Nepal lost an early wicket in the form of Aasif Sheikh (7), Bhurtel cut loose to score a 17-ball 29 with four boundaries and a six to set the tone.

But his promising start came to a meek end when Bhurtel couldn't keep it down, giving a simple return catch to Will Jacks in the sixth over.

Brief scores: England: 184/7 in 20 overs (Jos Buttler 26, Jacob Bethell 55, Harry Brook 53, Will Jacks 39 n.o.; Dipendra Singh Airee 2-23, Nandan Yadav 2-25) bt Nepal: 180/6 in 20 overs (Kushal Bhurtel 29, Rohit Paudel 39, Dipendra Singh Airee 44, Lokesh Bam 39 n.o.; Liam Dawson 2-21).
Result: England won by 4 runs.
PoM: Will Jacks.

Sri Lanka off to winning start

COLOMBO, PTI: Tournament co-hosts Sri Lanka produced a clinical, all-round performance to begin their campaign in the T20 World Cup with a 20-run victory over Ireland here on Sunday.

Asked to bat first, Kamindu Mendis' scintillating 19-ball 44 and Kusal Mendis' unbeaten half-century lifted Sri Lanka to 163 for six after a slow start.

Sri Lanka were also helped by a few dropped catches by the Irish fielders in the floodlit R Premadasa Stadium.

In reply, Ireland were all out for 143 in 19.5 overs.

Ross Adair struck 34 off 23 balls, while Harry Tector made 40 off 34 deliveries.

Maheesh Theekshana (3/23 in 4 overs) and Wanindu Hasaranga (3/25 in 4 overs) were excellent with the ball, playing vital roles in the Sri Lankan victory.

In the chase, Ireland lost skipper Paul Stirling (6) in the fourth over with just 24 runs on the board, but Ross Adair looked in good touch and was dealing in boundaries to quickly move to 29 off 16 balls as his team reached 45 for one at the end of power play.

Brief scores: Sri Lanka: 163/5 in 20 overs (Kusal Mendis 56 not out, Kamindu Mendis 44; Barry McCarthy 2-40, George Dockrell 2-17) bt Ireland: 143 all out in 19.5 overs (Ross Adair 34, Harry Tector 40; Maheesh Theekshana 3-23, Matheesha Pathirana 2-26, Wanindu Hasaranga 3-25).
Result: Sri Lanka won by 20 runs.
PoM: Kamindu Mendis.

Seifert steers NZ home vs Afghans

CHENNAI, PTI

Tim Seifert. PTI

Tim Seifert's typically aggressive fifty was the moving force behind New Zealand's five-wicket victory over Afghanistan in a Group D match of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

Seifert (65, 42b, 7x4, 3x6) showed why he has been nicknamed 'Bam Bam' in Kiwis' circles, helping his side go past the target of 183 with considerable ease.

Seifert had an equally single-minded partner in Glenn Phillips (42, 25b) as the third wicket pair added 74 runs in 47 balls to rescue New Zealand from a wobbly 14 for two.

The turbulence was the after result of the little passage of magic by spinner Mujeeb ur Rahman, who dismissed Finn Allen and Rachin Ravindra off successive balls in the second over.

But the Antipodeans clawed back through Seifert, who fetched his fifty off 39 balls with a six off off-spinner Mohammad Nabi. As the noon moved on, the assistance for spinners from the pitch was reduced to a good extent.

Phillips focused more on Rashid Khan, slamming him for a four and six as New Zealand got a real move-on. However, Nabi had the last laugh, dismissing Seifert, and Rashid too got his revenge through the wicket of Phillips. Seifert was dropped on 48 by Rashid off his own bowling, and the wicketkeeper batter maximised the let-off.

But by then, New Zealand were so close to home and reached there through Daryl Mitchell and Mitchell Santner, who knocked off the remaining 28 runs without much ado.

Earlier, seasoned Gulbadin Naib made a free-flowing fifty but Afghanistan had to settle for slightly below-par total of 182 for six.

Brief scores: Afghanistan: 182/6 in 20 overs (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 27, Gulbadin Naib 63, Sediqullah Atal 29; Lockie Ferguson 2-40) lt to New Zealand: 183/5 in 17.5 overs (Tim Seifert 65, Glenn Phillips 42, Mark Chapman 28, Daryl Mitchell 25 n.o.; Mujeeb Ur Rahman 2-31). **Result:** NZ win by 5 wkts. **PoM:** Tim Seifert.

South Africa aim to reverse recent form

AHMEDABAD, PTI: South Africa would need to raise their recent form to challenge for the title as they open their T20 World Cup campaign against Canada, a team short on match practice but looking to make a strong impression, here on Monday.

South Africa have only managed to win 12 out of the 32 games they have played since losing the 2024 T20 World Cup final to India in June 2024.

However, they now do have the emboldened belief of winning a world title, having ended the trophy drought with the World Test Championships triumph last year.

Ryan Rickleton and Tristian Stubbs were not part of the original squad but have rightfully included following injuries to Donavan Ferreria and Tony de Zorzi.

Keshav Maharaj will lead the spin attack while the performance of pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada will be critical as ever on the batting friendly pitches in India and Sri Lanka.

Quinton de Kock and Dewald Brevis will be the players to watch out for in the batting department.

Zimabwe meet Oman

Zimbabwe have a point to prove having missed the last edition of the tournament.

While there are plenty of familiar faces with skipper Sikandar Raza and wicketkeeper Brendan Taylor, it was Brian Bennett who played a big part in seeing Zimbabwe through the Qualifiers.

ZIM V OMA (3 PM); SA V CAN (7 PM)

Aiden Markram

Football giants Italy set for new cricketing chapter

KOLKATA, PTI: Football powerhouse Italy will get a chance to make a mark in cricket's biggest stage when they face Scotland in a historic ICC T20 World Cup debut game here on Monday.

Winner of four FIFA World Cups, the Azzurri will now give way to Gli Azzurri who find themselves scripting an unlikely cricketing chapter after making the expanded 20-team tournament through the European regional qualifiers last July.

Italy and Channel Islanders Jersey, who upset Scotland, finished on five points, but the Italians sealed the second place behind the Dutchmen on superior net run rate to book their maiden appearance at the global showpiece.

Captain Wayne Madsen **(in pic)** is South African-born and qualifies through his Italian grandmother as he's set for his debut in a cricket World Cup two decades after representing his native country in the hockey edition.

The 15-man squad includes two sets of Australian brothers with Italian family connections -- Harry and Ben Manenti, and Anthony and Justin Mosca -- while JJ Smuts adds experience.

LIVE 11:00 AM, STAR SPORTS

Aminul in Pak as ICC, PCB hold talks

KARACHI, PTI

Pakistan Cricket Board chairman Mohsin Naqvi on Sunday met his Bangladesh counterpart Aminul Islam and ICC deputy chair Imran Khwaja in Lahore, even as efforts to resolve the standoff over Pakistan's proposed boycott of the high-stakes T20 World Cup match against India gather pace.

The meeting, images of which were released by the PCB, took place at the Gaddafi Stadium.

Khwaja arrived in Lahore for talks with PCB officials amid growing indications that the deadlock over the high-profile February 15 clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan in Colombo could be resolved, paving the way for the match to go ahead.

BCB chief Aminul Islam

Khwaja, who represents Singapore in the ICC, is an influential figure in the world governing body and has voting rights on the board as an associate member director.

A source close to the PCB confirmed Khwaja has been nominated by the ICC board as a mediator on the controversial subject.

"He has been in talks with Mohsin Naqvi for a while now and he is reaching Lahore today to first talk to the PCB chief and also the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President, Aminul Islam," the source said.

Aminul is expected to be part of the discussions aimed at persuading Pakistan to reconsider its decision not to play India in the World Cup.

The two officials -- Khwaja and Aminul -- were greeted at the airport by senior PCB officials and then driven to the Gaddafi Stadium.

A PCB source said that Khwaja and Aminul, after their discussion with Naqvi, will have a meeting with some ICC governing board members virtually on Sunday.

The source said the ICC was doing its best to convince PCB to get permission from its government for the February 15 match.

Aminul reached Lahore ahead of Khwaja and his presence is significant because the dispute between the PCB and ICC began because of the apex body's decision to replace Bangladesh with Scotland after the former refused to play their World Cup matches in India, citing security reasons.

PM Shahbaz Sharif recently said that Pakistan's decision to not play against India was taken to show solidarity with Bangladesh.

Tejaswin Shankar

Tejaswin clinches India's lone gold

TIANJIN, PTI: Tejaswin Shankar won the men's heptathlon event to clinch India's lone gold as the country ended the Asian Indoor Athletics Championships campaign with five medals here on Sunday.

India finished overall sixth in the medals tally. China topped the chart with 34 medals -- 10 gold, 11 silver and 13 bronze.

On his way to winning the gold medal in heptathlon, Shankar collected 5993 points to better his own national indoor mark of 5650 points set in 2021 in the USA.

Pooja (silver in high jump), Tajinderpal Singh Toor (silver in shot put) and Ancy Sojan (bronze in long jump) were other medal winners on Sunday.

On opening day on Friday, India's high jumper Aadrash Ram Jothi Shankar had won a bronze.

Shankar, who was leading on Day 1, continued his good form in the next three events -- 60m hurdles, pole vault and 1000m -- on Sunday.

In the 60m hurdles, Shankar clocked a time of 8.02 seconds to earn 977 points. With two events to go, the Indian athlete was nearly 485 points ahead of his nearest rivals.

TENNIS DAVIS CUP QUALIFIERS

India seal epic win over Dutch

Dhakshineswar wins decider against Den Ouden to announce his arrival

HITA PRAKASH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Throwing everything in the tank onto the court, the final day of the Davis Cup Qualifiers Round 1 tie between India and the Netherlands turned into a physical slugfest between players at the SM Krishna Tennis Stadium here.

And after close to eight hours of trading blows, fighting to survive and gasping to hold their respective flags above the water, it was India's Dhakshineswar Suresh who sizzled not once but twice to carry the hosts into the next round of the tournament in September.

With the tie level at 1-1 at the end of the opening day, Dhakshineswar replaced Sriram Balaji to partner Yuki Bhambri for the doubles rubber. The duo got the ball rolling by beating David Pel/ Sander Arends 7-6 (0), 3-6, 7-6 (1) before Sumit Nagal got on to the court for the first reverse singles. India's top singles player's spirited performance, however, ended in a heartbreaking 7-5, 1-6, 4-6 loss to Jesper De Jong.

It all came down to 6-feet-5 Dhakshineswar, once again, and for the third time in the contest, the Madurai man delivered to win the fifth rubber 6-4, 7-6 (4) over Guy Den Ouden to give India a thrilling 3-2 victory over the Dutch, the current world No. 6 and 2024 runner-up.

Indian players and coaching staff carry Dhakshineswar Suresh on their shoulders after the 25-year-old clinches the deciding reverse singles tie against the Netherlands' Guy Den Ouden in Bengaluru on Sunday. DH PHOTO/ KRISHNAKUMAR P S

Earlier, the hope for the home team was ignited by Bhambri and Dhakshineswar. If the 33-year-old Bhambri was entrusted to lead from the back of the court, his younger partner Dhakshineswar donned the role of the finisher at the net and with the serve. On the other end, Pel anchored the team, setting up points while Arends' deft volleys got the job done.

Following both teams surviving their first scares on Bhambri's and Arends' servers, in the seventh and eighth games respectively, the four men stretched the first set to a tie-breaker where the Indians walloped 7-0 to go one up. Coming back and making amends, the Dutch needed just one break in the seventh game to close out the second set.

Back to square all over again, the third set battle saw Bhambri's and Arends' service games targeted but remained unsuccessful, Dhanshineswar continued his barrage, Pel huffed and puffed but held fort. As a second tie-breaker ensued, the Indians grabbed hold of one rally at a time to win the three-hour contest and give India a point before passing the baton to Nagal.

Inspired by team-mates Bhambri and Dhakshineswar's doubles show, Nagal came out on Sunday with more intent. Moving freely and hitting the ball clean, he broke De Jong in the first game before conceding his service game in the eighth. Capitalising on another break in the 11th, Nagal held to win the first set 7-5.

The world No. 88 De Jong then forged his own comeback. Relying on making his opponent run from corner to corner and playing a few drop shots to take Nagal by surprise, the 25-year-old Dutchman stepped up to clinch the second set.

Locking horns with every swing of the racquet, De Jong and Nagal traded as many as five breaks between them. As the clock neared the three-hour mark, the visitor who won a total of 100 points as compared to Nagal's 87 survived to win the battle of minute margins.

By now, at 2-2 on a Sunday night the stage was set for India's new tennis find to shine. And the self-proclaimed 'shy and introverted guy' Dhakshineswar radiated under lights in what will go down as one of India's most memorable Davis Cup victories.

Result (day 2): India bt Netherlands: 3-2 (**Doubles:** Yuki Bhambri/ Dhakshineswar Suresh bt David Pel/ Sander Arends 7-6 (0), 3-6, 7-6 (1); **Reverse singles:** Sumit Nagal lt to Jesper De Jong 7-5, 1-6, 4-6; Dhakshineswar bt Guy Den Ouden 6-4, 7-6 (4).

Stumper Kruthik's day out in Mumbai

G KRISHNAN
MUMBAI

Karnataka's wicketkeeper Kruthik Krishna (**in pic**) created a State record of seven dismissals in an innings when he took six catches in Mumbai's second innings in the ongoing Ranji Trophy quarterfinal on Sunday to add to his stumping of Yashasvi Jaiswal the previous day.

Krishna's effort is laudable as it has come in only his second Ranji Trophy appearance, having made his debut against Punjab in the last league match the previous week in Mohali, taking over the big gloves from KL Shrijith.

It was a challenge to keep wickets at the MCA-BKC ground that offered a lot of bounce to the fast bowling trio of Prasidh Krishna, Vidwath Kaverappa and Vidyadhar Patil. Barring the odd lapse here and there, 23-year-old Krishna held on to most of the edges that came his way. And he even made a couple of acrobatic collections with the ball rising over his head.

Elated about his record in only his second first-class match, Kruthik said: "The start of Day 3 didn't go that well for me as I left a couple of byes through my hands. And then, two-three balls just popped out of my hand. All these things were running in my mind, creating doubts. But, playing quarterfinals against Mumbai meant everything. Our bowlers came in really well and got those nicks. I'm just really grateful for all the chances that came my way."

With varying paces of Prasidh, Vidyadhar and Vidwath, Kruthik felt the Test paceman was more challenging to keep.

"Prasidh was a little bit challenging because he has the extra bit of bounce and then the ball wobbles. And, especially for Prasidh, it swings at the last moment. Also, I have played most of my cricket with Vidwath and Vidyadhar while this is the second or third time playing with Prasidh."

Hailing from Mandya and playing all his childhood there, he moved to Bengaluru to train at the KSCA academy post-Covid to realise his dreams.

Rahul leads Karnataka's fightback on Day 3

Visitors let Mumbai tail to wag, need 212 for win after finishing at 113/2

G KRISHNAN
MUMBAI

Karnataka bowlers picked up five wickets in the morning session and another one off the second delivery post lunch to regain the lost ground on the third day of the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal here on Sunday.

However, with the match fortunes swinging back and forth as both sides tussled to gain control, Karnataka let go of yet another advantage when they needed to take the remaining two Mumbai second innings wickets and restrict their overall lead to under 250.

Instead, a brilliant rearguard act by No. 10 Tushar Deshpande, attacking the Karnataka speedsters and spinners alike for a 40-ball 47 (7x4, 2x6), and his 89-run stand for the ninth wicket with Tanush Kotian (48 not out) allowed Mumbai to take their lead to 324, pushing the visitors behind.

Mumbai, resuming their second essay at 189/2, were all out for 377. Karnataka knocked 113 runs off the target, losing Mayank Agarwal and skipper Devdutt Padikkal, needing another 212 for a semifinal berth. And, Mumbai need eight more wickets with Monday, weather permitting, most likely to produce a result.

The target of 325 may not seem huge as Karnataka had more than seven sessions to achieve it. It's the wearing pitch assisting turn that they are wary of. Mumbai's left-arm spinner Shams Mulani and off-spinner Tanush Kotian are more than a handful at this MCA-BKC ground when it starts turning.

Cheap dismissal

Despite the cheap dismissal of first innings top-scorer Mayank Agarwal to the trap at deep backward square leg off Shardul Thakur, KL Rahul (60 n.o., 94b, 7x4) and Padikkal (39) played attractive strokes, picking up the gaps for boundaries and the odd six to give Karnataka a realistic chance of winning.

The two added 84 for the second wicket before Padikkal (39) was caught brilliantly left-handed at slips by Yashasvi Jaiswal off Kotian's first delivery.

KL Rahul. PTI FILE PHOTO

Earlier, Karnataka's left-arm spinner Shikhar Shetty (3/45) picked up three of the five Mumbai wickets to fall in the first session.

Speedster Vidyadhar Patil drew first blood, dismissing Musheer Khan for 49 in the day's first over, the rising delivery taking the outside edge en route to Kruthik, playing only his second Ranji game, for the first of his six catches in the innings. Add his stumping of Jaiswal on Saturday and Kruthik's seven dismissals are a Karnataka record in Ranji Trophy.

Half-centurion Akash Anand (70), too, fell to a nick behind off Vidwath Kaverappa.

Thereafter, Shikhar bowled a tidy spell of 9-1-16-3 and saw the backs of the defensive Siddhesh Lad (LBW), left-hander Shams Mulani, sweeping from outside off and edging to Kruthik down the leg side and Thakur nicking to lone slip Rahul, the last two wickets falling four deliveries apart.

And, when Suryansh Shedge chased a widish delivery from Patil only to get an edge to Kruthik, Karnataka had Mumbai eight down for an overall lead of 234.

But, the patient Kotian and the aggressive Deshpande swung the momentum in Mumbai's favour by taking the overall lead beyond 300. Kotian survoived some serious short-ball barrage, especially from Prasidh, twice in a row getting hit on his helmet while ducking.

Deshpande attacked the speedsters Prasidh and Vidyadhar before Vidwath's short ball did him in, the ball ballooning behind for Kruthik to complete a smart catch diving forward.

SCORE BOARD

MUMBAI (I Innings): 120
KARNATAKA (I Innings): 173
MUMBAI (II Innings), O/n: 189/2): Yashasvi Jaiswal st Kruthik b Shreyas Gopal 36, Akhil Herwadkar (run out) 33, Akash Anand c Kruthik b Kaverappa 70, Musheer Khan c Kruthik b Vidtadhar 49, Siddesh Lad lbw Shikhar 25, Suryansh Shedge c Kruthik b Vidyadhar 25, Shams Mulani c Kruthik b Shikhar 9, Shardul Thakur c Rahul b Shikhar 1, Tanush Kotian (not out) 48, Tushar Deshpande c Kruthik b Kaverappa 47, Mohit Avasthi c Kruthk b Prasidh 0. Extras (B-9, LB-14, W-9, NB-2) 34. **Total (all out, 98.3 overs) 377**.
Fall of wickets: 1-77, 2-77, 3-191, 4-227, 5-241, 6-256, 7-258, 8-287, 9-376.
Bowling: Vidyadhar Patil 22-5-78-2, Prasidh Krishna 19.3-2-71-1, Vidwath Kaverappa 17-0-78-2, Shreyas Gopal 20-2-82-1, Shikhar Shetty 20-3-45-3.
KARNATAKA (II Innings, target: 325): Mayank Agarwal c Avasthi b Thakur 3, KL Rahul (batting) 60, Devdutt Padikkal c Jaiswal b Kotian 39, Karun Nair (batting) 9. Extras (LB-2) 2. **Total (for 2 wkts, 29 overs) 113**
Fall of wickets: 1-12, 2-96.
Bowling: Shardul Thakur 5-1-24-1, Mohit Avasthi 5-0-18-0, Shams Mulani 8-0-32-0, Tushar Deshpande 5-0-23-0, Tanush Kotian 5-0-13-1, Musheer Khan 1-0-1-0.

Other quarterfinals: Brief scores: At Indore: Jammu & Kashmir: 194 all out & (O/n: 84/5): 248 all out in 70.3 overs (Abdul Samad 32, Abid Mushtaq 41, Vanshaj Sharma 54 n.o., Sunil Kumar 26) vs Madhya Pradesh: 152 all out & 87/5 in 28 overs (Himanshu Mantri 31; Auqib Nabi 3-23, Abid Mushtaq 2-19).
At Kolkata: Andhra: 295 all out in 88.4 overs (Srikar Bharat 47, Shaik Rasheed 46, Ricky Bhui 83, Nitish Kumar Reddy 33; Mukesh Kumar 5-66, Akash Deep 4-79) vs Bengal: (O/n: 199/5): 418/6 in 146 overs (Sudip Kumar Gharami 216 n.o., Sumanta Gupta 81, Habib Gandhi 45 n.o.; KV Sasikanth 2-59, Saurabh Kumar 2-81).
At Jamshedpur: Jharkhand: 235 all out & 130 all out in 41.1 overs (Kumar Kushagra 34, Virat Singh 55; Abhay Negi 4-36, Mayank Mishra 5-22) lt to Uttarakhand: (O/n: 282/5): 371 all out in 122.3 overs (Avneesh Sudha 64, Kunal Chandela 68, Jagadeesha Suchith 70, Saurabh Rawat 32, Abhay Negi 46; Jatin Pandey 2-72, Sahil Raj 2-59, Saurabh Shekhar 2-75, Aditya Singh 2-57) by an innings and six runs. **PoM:** Mayank Mishra.

India finished the BOXAM Elite International tournament with nine gold, three silver and seven bronze medals.

Lovlina, Arundhati spearhead India's gold rush in Spain

LA NUCIA (SPAIN), PTI: Olympic medallist Lovlina Borgohain and former Youth World champion Arundhati Choudhary led from the front as India wrapped up a highly successful BOXAM Elite International tournament with a dominant show, clinching nine gold medals in the event here.

In a standout achievement, India was represented in seven elite women's finals on Saturday, including an all-Indian title clash in the 54kg division and emerged with gold in each of them.

The BOXAM Elite featured over 200 boxers from 20 nations, providing a high-quality international test early in the season. India finished as the competition's most successful team with nine gold, three silver and seven bronze medals.

Indian women set the benchmark on the final day. Manju Rani (48kg) and Nitu (51kg) opened proceedings with emphatic unanimous wins over Spain's Marta Lopez and Noelia Gutierrez respectively, before Poonam (54kg) edged past compatriot Preeti in a hard-fought all-Indian final.

Priya (60kg) and Arundhati (70kg) followed with commanding 5:0 victories over Ukrainian opponents, while Lovlina (75kg) displayed her trademark boxing to defeat England's Mary-Kate Smith 4:1. Naina (80kg) completed the sweep with a measured win over Ukraine's Raisa Piskun.

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